Windows of Tolerance

Tools for Ideal Collaborations in an Unideal (Art) World

Feminist Culture House

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK?

This digital publication is free to download at feministculturehouse.org. It's also an interactive PDF, which means it contains hyperlinks that connect to different parts of the publication, or to external websites with more information.

If you click a lilac underlined text, you'll be redirected to an external website. A red underlined text means it's an internal link, and you'll be taken to another part of the publication, for example, to another chapter. To avoid having to scroll back and forth, click the home icon on the side of most pages to be taken back to the Table of contents, where you can navigate the publication with ease.

The Needs and Studio visit exercises contain editable text boxes where you can type and save your answers. Make sure to open the publication in a PDF viewer and hover under the exercise question to make the text box appear.

If you prefer to handwrite, you can find the exercise pages as a print-at-home file here. You can print

it and use them individually or with others. If you use them for educational purposes, or at any public gathering, we kindly ask you to credit Feminist Culture House as the original author.

If you want to share any of the contents of the publication online or with others, please do! The title and author credits are on most pages' headers and footers, so it's easy to share and credit at the same time. But if the content you want to share doesn't have those, please make sure to mention FCH as the original author. If you're sharing via Instagram, please tag us @feministculturehouse ✌️

As an intersectional feminist collective, our work strives to stand in solidarity not only within the realms of culture, but with everyone who resists violence and oppressive power structures. Since 2023, we've been working on this publication while witnessing many atrocities around the globe, including the escalation of Israel's ongoing genocidal war in Gaza—a continuation of more than 77 years of settler colonialism and apartheid.

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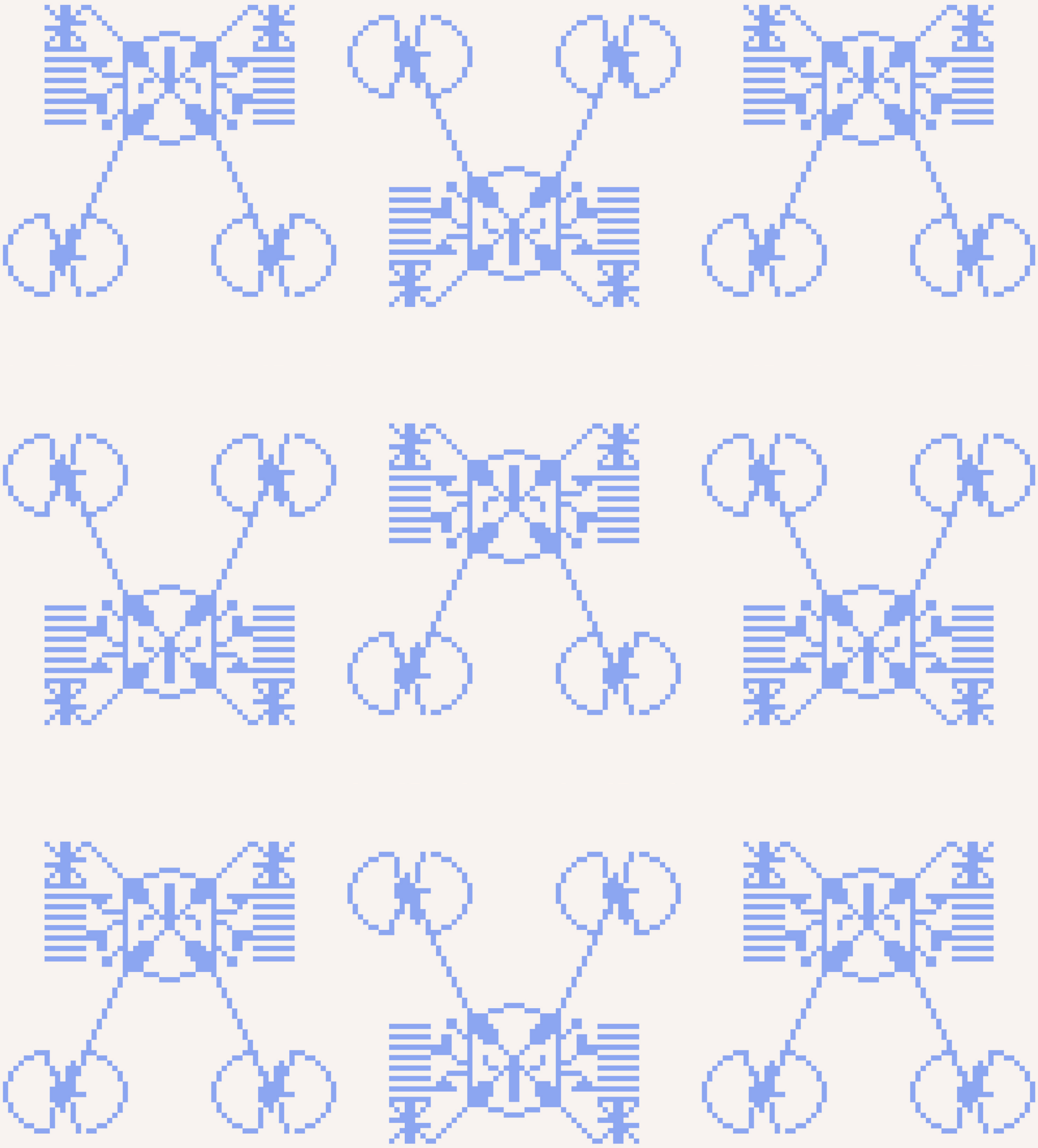
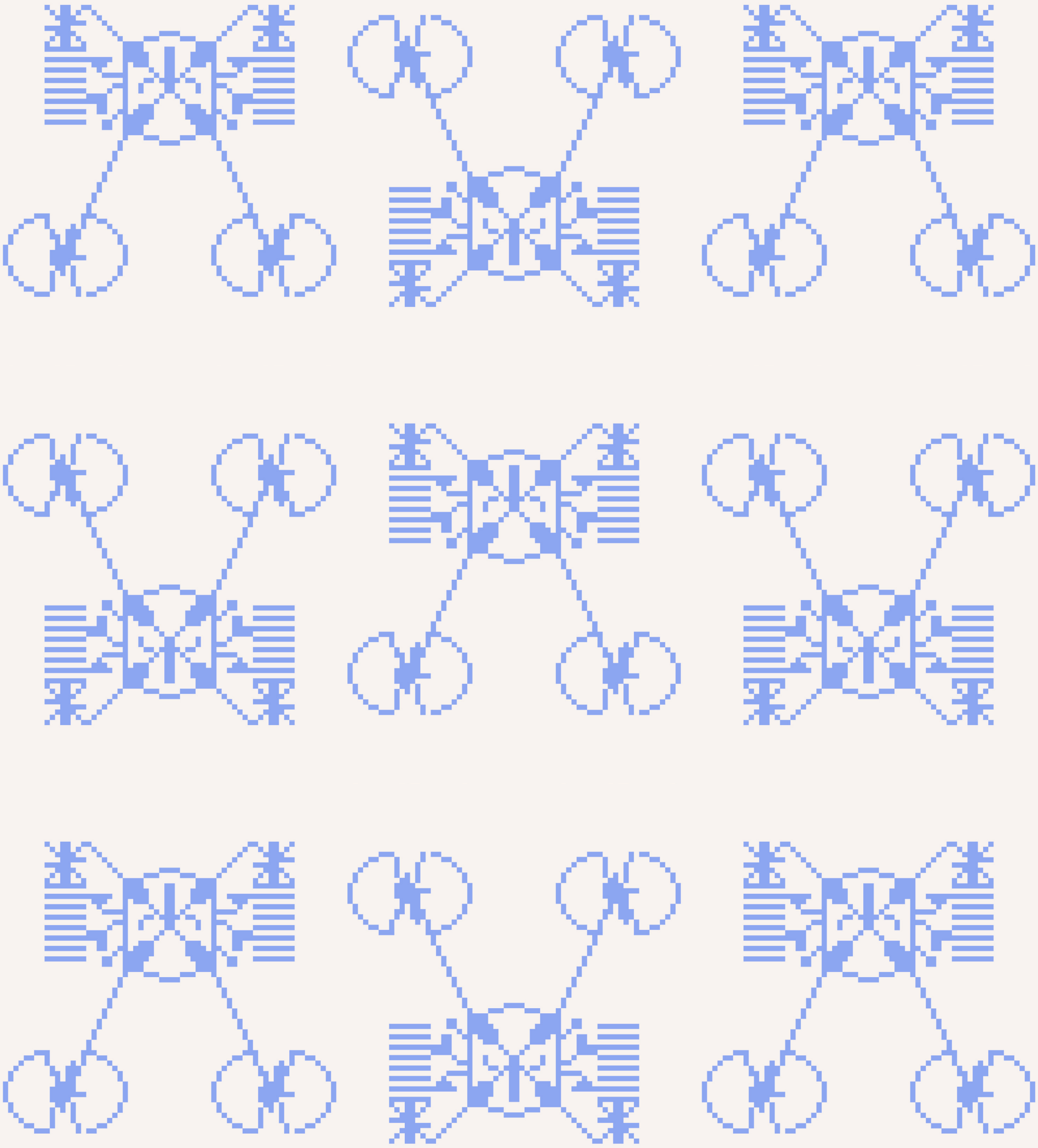
We stand in solidarity with Palestinians and all of those experiencing dehumanising border politics and immigration bureaucracies, and whose mobility is constrained by inhumane immigration logics worldwide. We stand in solidarity with indigenous peoples fighting against white supremacy, violence, and colonial states. We remind ourselves and others of the long (ongoing) history of Saami colonisation by Finland and other nation states, and support their right to self-determination and self-governance. And we dream of a world in which both physical and structural oppressions are not present in our bodies and in our lived realities.



Foreword



A *window of tolerance* is a term used in different kinds of therapeutic processes. It describes an optimal zone where one is able to regulate their emotions and function well in everyday life. It's a way to understand how our lived experiences affect the ways we encounter the world. It's also a tool that helps us identify what happens when stressors—internal and external—start to shrink this window, sending one into a state of hyperarousal (a fight, flight, or freeze response) or hypoarousal (the body starts to shut down). This concept allows us to better understand our emotional range, behaviours, and interpersonal relationships, amongst other things. Through different types of support, a window of tolerance can be expanded, resulting in a greater sense of comfort and safety.

Please note that although the publication's title references a therapeutic term, we're only using

it metaphorically. The publication's content is not meant to be used prescriptively, or as a replacement for psychological care. We also have no training in psychology or other therapeutic methods—this publication is made by cultural workers for cultural workers, as a response to our own experiences with unideal working conditions.

We at Feminist Culture House (FCH) have been interested in playing with this concept for a while, toying with it as a metaphor for describing the fluctuating zone(s) of comfort within which cultural workers operate. We think of it transcending instances of individual psychological responses; we notice how it seeps into our lives in insidious and persistent ways. Maybe you feel tired all the time, can't stay on top of household chores, haven't had a home-cooked meal in months, are finding it hard to get out of bed, haven't had time to spend with friends and kin, struggle to get away from screens, are overwhelmed by your to-do list, or are finding it hard to make time for fun and pleasure.

Or maybe you wake up in the middle of the night worried about paying your medical insurance,

renewing your residence permit, obtaining a steady income, securing affordable housing, navigating social security bureaucracies, paying caretaker bills, dealing with microaggressions and harassment from co-workers, finally getting an appointment to pursue gender-affirming care, or having to advocate for your neurodivergent experience within educational settings.

These and many other material and structural conditions also contribute to narrowing not only individual windows of tolerance but our collective windows too. They intersect and slowly accumulate into layers of stressors that limit our capacity to live fulfilling and dignified lives. The intersections of these conditions are of course infinite, and are experienced by many people in different contexts; it would be impossible to list them all. Our focus for this publication is to think about how these conditions permeate the art field.

Think of an artist who has a multi-year grant, a curator with a full-time position at a contemporary art museum, or a graphic designer working for an agency that has a steady flow of commercial and

cultural clients. These art workers probably have a wide window of tolerance, supported by a secured income, professional development and recognition, holidays, time to care for others, and access to different types of subsidised medical and holistic care.

Then, think of the members of a theatre collective without any funding: they can only work together a few times per month because they all need to have day jobs, and are only able to meet on weekends or evenings. Or consider a freelance producer, burnt out for several months after their last project but unable to find their next gig, anxiously wondering how to pay this month's bills. Or a musician who teaches children how to play guitar during the day, plays concerts at night, and works as a food delivery driver during the weekend. Their windows of tolerance are probably so narrow that they barely manage to function beyond the most basic tasks, and have no space for professional development or experimentation, nor time for taking care of themselves and others.

While windows of tolerance can be used as a conceptual frame to analyse an individual's

behaviour, we think that this tool also allows us to visibilise how larger societal structures produce conditions that benefit some and disadvantage many—that is, our windows of tolerance are often the result of prevailing intersectional inequalities, and to overcome these conditions, we need collective tools to help us communicate, share, and hopefully expand everyone's windows.

SHAKING THE STRUCTURES

Within the field of arts and culture, it's rare to work alone. Our practices are propelled by our relationships, and often involve different formulations of cooperation and coming together. Moments of fun, experimentation, solidarity, hospitality, reciprocity, empathy, pleasure, and celebration blossom when we work collectively. Through doing and learning together, we build friendships and connections that can nurture us for many years.

The aim of this publication is to guide collectivity, and foster transparency, accountability, kindness,

and consideration when working with others. The cultural field is often characterised by precarity and scarcity, which creates structures that feed individualism and hypercompetitiveness. In the long term, this ends up stripping away possibilities for solidarity and collectivity. Resources, safety, and security therefore become unequally distributed, creating unideal working conditions that compromise people's well-being. For us, this is unsustainable and needs to change—let's come together and test tools that can help us shake these unideal structures.

We know it's easy to feel hopeless about anything changing when many of these unideal conditions are structurally embedded. Nonetheless, we want to imagine strategies that allow us to coexist and co-work in ways that benefit the majority. We believe that the future of arts is collective and intersectional, and we hope this publication can serve as a blueprint for others in the cultural field to join this effort.

Who is in the room, and under what conditions?

WHO IS THIS FOR?

We imagine this publication being shared amongst freelance artists, cultural workers, and their peers as they move through the different stages of collaborative working practices. These practitioners often operate outside of clearly defined workplace venues and structures—work, art, and life might have a tendency to blur together. It can be hard to introduce formalities into friendships, to solidify how a project might be conducted while it's still in a speculative stage, or to begin a collaboration when you have little to no money.

We also hope this publication can offer guidance to those working in more structured institutional environments, who might be questioning norms and dreaming that things could be done differently. Unlike the autonomy granted to individual freelancers—who can often decide what they stand for, and define their working values, principles, motivations, and conduct—working for an institution usually comes with the implication of sidelining the self. Being part of a workplace requires a commitment to upholding an

institution's predetermined guiding values. Many people interpret this as suspending their individual capacity to self-define—they start sliding (and hiding?) under the 'cloak of the institution'.

> *Perhaps you start off hopeful—telling yourself that language is subjective, that flexibility will be found, and improvements are always welcome. You question the logic underpinning a common working practice, but a colleague shrugs and says, "That's just the way things are." You wonder how to challenge the way things are, but it's hard to find others willing to join you in shaking the structures. "That's outside the scope of my work", they say with a ¯_(ツ)_/¯*
>
> *As you gradually acquiesce, the cloak of the institution becomes part of your daily wardrobe, and you begin to shroud yourself with its norms. At some point, you stop questioning out loud; questioning is seen as difficult or confrontational, and it's easier to just go with the established flow. The cloak comes in handy to hide behind when you*

realise you're replicating normalised ways of doing. The cloak can be heavy, but at least you can take it off at the end of the day.

Within FCH, we often talk about the cloak of the institution, and how easy it is to pretend you have no choice but to wear it. We acknowledge that an institution's internal structures, systems, and politics are complex and ever-changing. But institutions are made up of individuals who face an array of everyday choices: questioning, interrogating, making overt, challenging, criticising, refusing, and subverting are some options at our disposal. Taking off the cloak—and wearing your heart on your sleeve—allows you to be transparent about your own politics and have the agency to make bold choices. When deciding on how you want to work—and which values you want to uphold—we invite you to hold on to the idea that wearing the cloak isn't always mandatory, and we each have a choice about how and when we use it.

SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

Windows of Tolerance: Tools for Ideal Collaborations in an Unideal (Art) World is a compilation of exercises, checklists, workflows, prompts for conversation, and practical tips that we have developed over the years while curating exhibitions, making publications, and developing workshops and other learning experiences. The publication invites the reader to become attuned to the social, cultural, and political implications of the working methods they put into practice, and to implement intersectional feminist working methodologies when collaborating with others.

The first three chapters—'Invitation', 'Open calls', and 'Studio visits'—provide a blueprint for initiating different kinds of collaborations and ways of coming together in the cultural field. Making an invitation, publishing an open call, or organising a studio visit can often feel overwhelming, especially if you want to approach potential collaborators generously, ethically, and transparently. With the help of customisable checklists and exercises, these tools can aid you when extending an

invitation to collaborate that's grounded in fair and kind working conditions.

The fourth chapter, '**Negotiations**', contains several exercises and prompts to guide individuals and groups to communicate their needs, hopes, expectations, boundaries, and windows of tolerance to others (and to themselves). This section reflects on how the act of visibilising labour can create equitable foundations for collaborative encounters. While collective work can be nourishing, it can also be a site for inconvenience and destabilisation. So we also share some starting points and prompts for addressing conflict and tension, in an effort not only to normalise their occurrence in collaborative processes, but also to view them as sites for growth and transformation.

In '**Other currencies**', we explore how reciprocal exchanges can be ethically used as alternative or supporting economies in our field, especially when working with limited financial resources. Acknowledgement and celebration are valuable currencies too, and are integral to feminist worldbuilding, so in '**Acknowledgement practices**'

you'll find questions to consider when presenting and promoting your work.

Finally, '**Reflection**' emphasises the importance of critical feedback, celebration, and nurturing relations after a project winds down. We've also listed some of the '**Resources**' that have guided the development of this publication, and some of our previous work.

We suggest reading this publication from start to finish, since the '**Foreword**' and '**Our practice**' chapters provide important conceptual frameworks for subsequent chapters. While each chapter can stand alone, we think it's helpful to keep those frameworks in mind as you make your way through the publication. You'll also find links that connect relevant information and ideas between chapters.

We hope that amongst these pages you'll find many seeds to pollinate the interlocking ecosystems of the cultural field with intersectional feminist working practices 🪻

Our practice

Feminist Culture House (FCH) is an intersectional feminist curatorial and editorial collective that produces exhibitions, publications, and other tools for more equitable collaborations within the art field. We are based in Helsinki, Finland, and our current working group is formed by Gladys Camilo, Paola Jalili, and Katie Lenanton.

Our work often sprouts at the intersection of lived experience and artistic practice. We value working processes that take into consideration slowness, reflection, transparency, clarity, kindness, exchange, and open communication. We prioritise collaborating with and highlighting the work of underrepresented artists, and work towards a world in which equality and equity are some of the core values that shape our collective existence.

Many of the ideas and tools presented in this publication are practices we have actively put forward when working with others—they have structured our work agreements, schedules, workshops, exhibition-making, and time spent with collaborators. This doesn't mean we always strictly follow these guidelines—there are also times when there's no time, capacity, or budget to do so—but we try as best as we can. And many other proposals in this publication are dreams, because ultimately we hope to work in a field where these practices are the standard.

For us, the concept of intersectional feminism is not just a theory, but a verb. It requires action, doing, persistence, and repetition. Practising it is an act of worldbuilding. We invite you to think about how to enact it in your own work—through the decisions you make, through whatever power you hold, and the ways you choose to relate to others in this world.

In this publication, we make use of a few key terms that serve as conceptual frameworks that guide our text, and also our practice more broadly: *lived experiences*, *intersectionality*, and *(under) representation*. These are complex and important concepts for us, and we strive to centre them in our work. We also invite you to keep them in mind while reading these pages, and when using the tools presented here.

Following a long tradition of feminist and anti-racist thinkers, we adhere to the idea that our experiences are framed and limited by the bodies we occupy, the geographical and historical contexts we inhabit, and the value systems that have shaped us. And we remind ourselves and others that our bodies and lives have different and fluctuating needs, often shaped by gender, racialisation, neurodivergence, age, citizenship, spectrums of mental and physical health, wealth, class, sexuality, and belief systems, just to name a few. We refer to these as *lived experiences*.

Everyone has a unique and distinct collection of lived experiences—we all contain multitudes <3

It takes time, effort, and care to build a trusting environment where we can share these ever-changing experiences with each other. When we collaborate with others, we know it's hard to fully understand what's going on in people's lives, but we try to listen, attune, and put forward a variety of support structures for a variety of lived experiences.

This can look like budgeting for access needs in our events (renting comfy chairs for a workshop, offering healthy snacks, and including breaks); providing written agreements to everyone we collaborate with (they qualify as official documents for immigration or social security requirements); scheduling check-in sessions with collaborators (maybe they have worked more hours than initially imagined, and using the spoon theory could ground the check-in process); naming our reproductive labour commitments (taking a parent to a doctor's appointment, bringing food to a friend who broke their leg, picking up kids from day care); and researching and learning how to conduct trauma-informed work (including safer space guidelines, and content and trigger warnings in

communications). We actively try to reflect on what forms of support could be needed in the moment, while knowing these processes can be haphazard and messy, full of trial and error—they require us to challenge the norms that structure our social practices.

We persist in doing this because, as we said before, our feminism is *intersectional*. Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw uses the term intersectionality when describing how 'multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves'.[1] While her approach points to the intersections of race and gender discrimination, this idea has since been expanded to encompass a variety of social structures. As lived experiences intersect with one another in multiple ways, it's important to understand that some are enshrined and valued more than others. While this process is often labelled 'marginalisation', we prefer to use the term *underrepresentation* in an attempt to reclaim the agency of those voices. Moreover, throughout many years working as a collective, and hand in hand with our members' own lived experiences, we've also actively used this term

How can I work in ways that uplift and support my collaborators?

to prompt awareness around equity in our particular context.

These conceptual frameworks help us cultivate empathy when dealing with others in collective practices. Although it can feel hard to resist some of the aforementioned structures and systems, we find inspiration and purpose in the idea of *prefigurative politics*, defined by Paul Raekstad and Sofa Saio Gradin as the 'deliberate experimental implementation of desired future social relations and practices in the here-and-now'.[2] Using prefigurativism as a guide, this publication invites the reader to put into practice the (art) world we want to see in the future, today.

1. Invitation

Getting invited to participate in a project can spark tingles of excitement. It may boost your creativity, inspire you to explore new directions in your practice, or provide the possibility to collaborate with someone you admire. At the same time, inviting others to collaborate can sometimes be intimidating, particularly if you don't know the other person very well. You might also wonder how to best frame your proposal when resources are limited.

For us, the best invitations are clear, kind, and compelling. They explicitly lay out the scope of the job, and are upfront about participants' working conditions. They make you feel juiced up.

But then again, we've all received an invitation to collaborate that's frustratingly light on important details (like, is this a paid gig?!, or, when is the deadline?!). They come via emails, texts, DMs, or

during casual conversations, which then often spiral into an endless back-and-forth as you struggle to understand what's on offer. Maybe the proposal doesn't end up working for you, but a lot of time, energy, and communication has been required to reach that realisation. It's good to recognise that time and attention are also currencies worth valuing—we expand on this thinking in 'Other currencies'.

When we work together and with others, we always try to remind ourselves that capitalism urges us to constantly hustle, overproduce, always say yes, and compete for visibility. We try to resist these logics through working slowly, non-competitively, and within our capacities, while striving to build and maintain long-term relationships.

The checklists in the following pages provide guidance for structuring a clear, kind, and considerate invitation. Every collaboration has different parameters and ramifications, so don't feel pressured to fulfil every suggested option. These guidelines can be adapted to the needs

of your project; you might also need to include other sections, details, or definitions particular to your field or situation, but we hope this serves as a solid starting point when sitting down to draft that email 🫣

BEFORE SENDING THE INVITATION, TAKE SOME TIME TO THINK ABOUT...

- **Is this the moment to bring in collaborators?** It's important to be accountable for the collaborative environment you're creating. You can also use the checklists to gauge if you can communicate your expectations and working conditions clearly. If not, consider taking time to prepare more before bringing others in: everyone will benefit ✨

- **What is at stake when sending an invitation?** Collaborating amongst a group of friends is one thing, but an invitation from an institutional representative could imply a long-term and better-resourced opportunity, like a commission. So think about your position in relation to that of the invitee. At FCH we often ask ourselves and others who is in the room and under what conditions. That might be a good question to ask before sending an invitation.

- **Cold-calling?** Including all the information suggested in the checklists might be too much

if you are connecting with someone for the first time. You can also consider sending a short invitation with the most relevant points (brief project summary, timeline, fee, why them?) to test the waters.

Invitation checklists

1. Introductions

- ○ Who are you?
    - ○ What's your role in the project?
- ○ Why are you inviting this person / collective to this project?
    - ○ What do you admire about their work?

2. The collaboration proposal

- ○ What is it? Can you provide a short summary to situate the invitee?
- ○ Why are you doing this project?
- ○ Where does it take place?
- ○ Who else is involved?
    - ○ When will everyone be introduced?
    - ○ How will we work together?
- ○ Are there any other partners / institutions / funding bodies / state bodies involved?
- ○ What do you expect from the invitee?

3a. Payment

- **What fee can you offer?**
  - Can you provide a transparent overview of how the budget will be distributed?
  - If there is no budget, are there any other currencies that can be negotiated?
  - When can the fee be paid?

Remember! If your fee is low (or non-existent), be upfront about it instead of revealing it after a negotiation process. You can clarify it's not a reflection of the person's work or worth, but an unideal condition 🪟

3b. Payment

- ○ What kind of payment / employment relationship can you offer?
  - ○ One-time fee
  - ○ Salary
  - ○ Invoice required
  - ○ Is the fee inclusive or exclusive of taxes?

4. Timeline

- ○ Can you provide key dates & deadlines at this point? Or are there any tentative dates & deadlines to consider for now?
- ○ Is the project contingent on funding?
    - ○ When will you know if funding is granted?

5a. If the project takes place away from home...

- ○ Can you cover travel / accommodation costs?
    - ○ Can you provide funding / support for slow travel?
- ○ Can you provide per diems? Living in a different place can be expensive!
- ○ Can you contribute to caregiving costs (for example, a personal care assistant or childcare worker)?
- ○ If you don't have a budget to cover travel expenses, do you know of funding that can support this?

5b. If the project takes place away from home...

- Can you provide information about potential visa requirements?
    - Do you have experience working with artists who need visas to travel to your country? Can you share knowledge or tips?
    - Do you have the budget to cover potential visa costs?
- If the invitee can't travel, can you put forward alternatives so they can still participate (remotely, instructionally, shipping works, etc.)?

6. Let's circle back...

- ○ Consider how to ensure the invitee feels confident there is room to continue the conversation / negotiate / ask questions / take time to say yes or no
- ○ Are you available to have a follow-up chat to discuss questions / ideas / concerns?

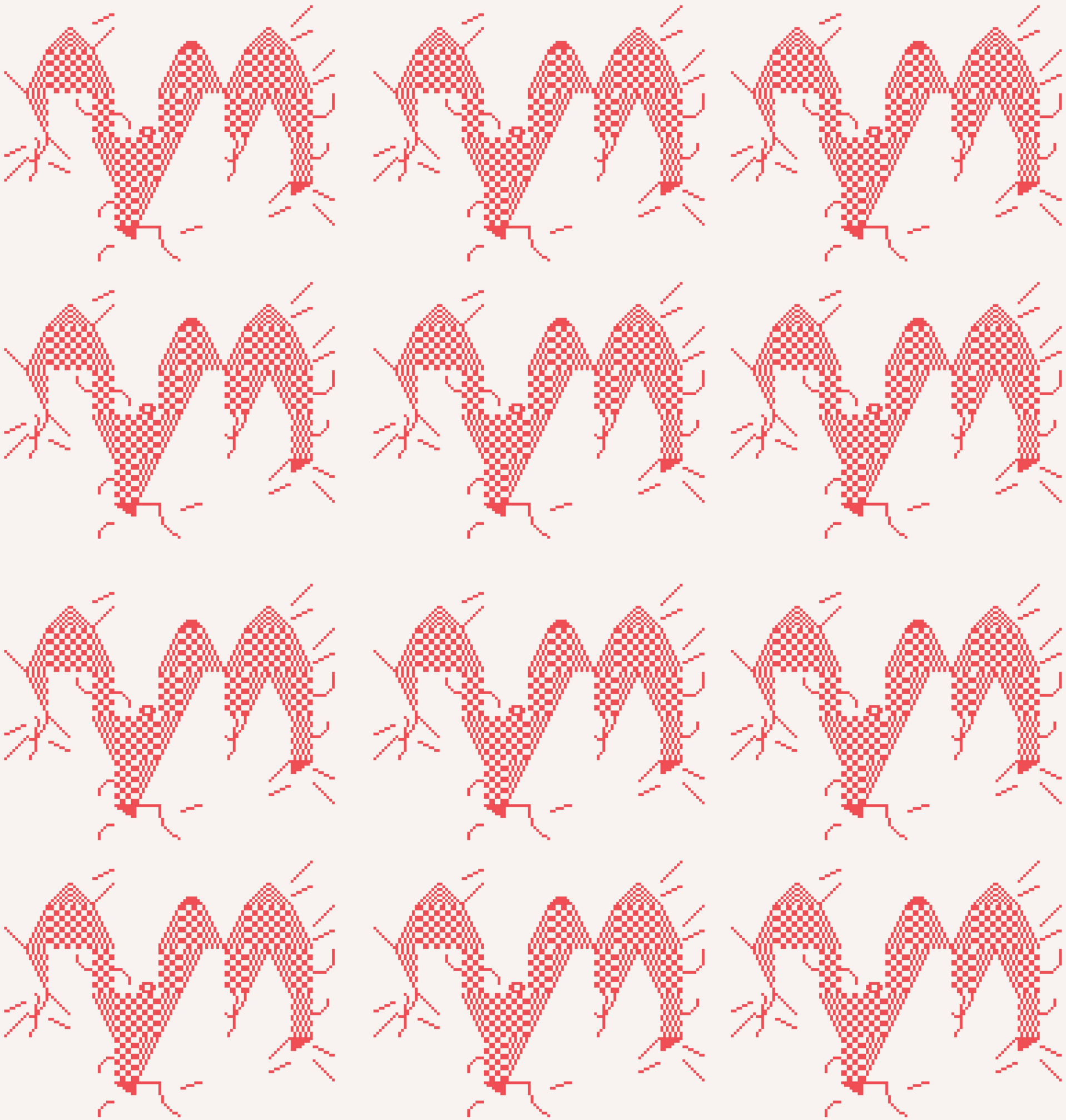
SAYING NO

- **Let's remember that saying no is a feminist practice too.** In a cultural field where a scarcity of opportunities is the norm, we might fear that if we say no once, we won't be asked ever again. On top of that, those who experience structural obstacles and face economic urgencies—for example, disabled and chronically sick people, those with an impermanent residency status, working class, and Black, Indigenous, and other racialised people—can feel even more hesitant to say no.

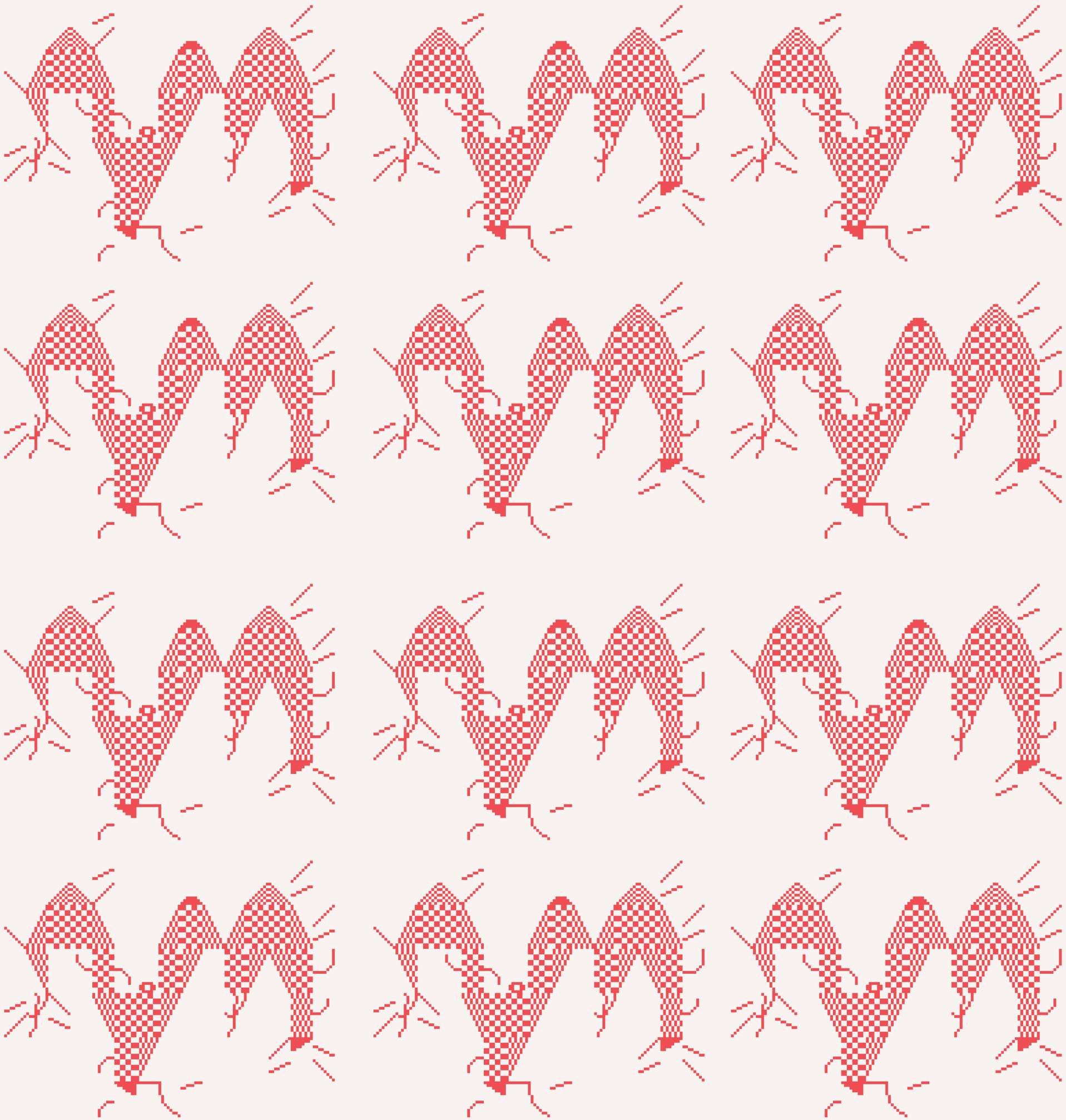
- **So, when writing an invitation, why not be explicit that saying no is an option too?** You could encourage the invitee to reflect on their window of tolerance to see if they have the capacity to join this collaboration. If they don't, you can also express a sincere wish to collaborate with them in the future.

- **If someone has said no once, check back in!** Our bodies and life situations are always changing, along with our capacities. Maybe they'll be able to say yes next time.

- **We also recognise that saying no can be hard.** Checking in with friends can help to get an impartial take on the invitation. If you're still feeling stuck, check out this helpful **Money compass for precarious workers**, kindly shared by our Sounding Board member Airi Triisberg. It can guide you along ethical pathways for navigating unideal situations.



2. Open calls



Participating in competitive unpaid creative work has long been normalised in the cultural field—performers audition, designers pitch, and artists apply to open calls (and are sometimes even asked to pay for the 'privilege'). Open calls are ways to distribute resources, opportunities, and visibility through commissions, grants, exhibitions, residencies, publications, and educational opportunities, for example. They call for applicants to engage in acts of speculative thinking, and respond to project parameters that are often blurry.

Open calls metaphorically invoke the idea of institutions opening their doors, levelling the playing field, expanding their networks, and ostensibly considering anyone with the time, resources, and energy to apply. But it's rare for them to be truly open to everyone.

Dear open call organisers: please don't ghost applicants!

Maybe they're more like a lottery with only a few winners, who might not even be paid for their work ("But hey, you're getting all this exposure!"). Although they're 'open', that doesn't mean they're transparent about decision-making; not everyone has an equal chance of being shortlisted, or winning. The selection process might feature unspoken criteria, conflicts of interest, and unquestioned biases. It can also be influenced by an artists' experience, visibility, networks, (strong) writing skills and language proficiency, and access to digital tools and platforms or design software, just to name a few. Additionally, it's common that artists who face structural barriers or precarity can't afford the unpaid labour required to apply. So a concise application process that also makes space for answers in different formats—like audio, text, and video—is one way an open call organiser can support applicants.

A key—albeit often undervalued—currency artists have is their tangibly expressed ideas. Open calls often require applicants to be vulnerable when submitting a proposal, and to trust their moral rights as creators will be respected. Sadly, we've

heard of open call organisers implementing an applicant's concept without involving (or paying) them.

When applying for open calls, it's a good idea to think about the authorship and confidentiality of your proposal. There are different frameworks that you can use to state this, such as copyright, copyleft, or Creative Commons. You might wish to include a text like: 'This proposal has been authored by [name, year]. No part may be reproduced by any process or person, nor may any other exclusive rights be exercised, without my permission.' Those in charge of the open call process could clearly state: 'The application process is confidential, and the authorship and moral rights of the applicant will be respected.'

Ultimately, being upfront and transparent can make your open call more accessible for all, particularly those who have historically been underrepresented in your field. The following checklists gather questions to ask yourself when conceptualising, drafting, and organising an open call. Hopefully they also prompt you to articulate your ethics,

values, openness, transparency, and approach to collaborative work. Like in the '**Invitation**' chapter, we encourage you to use these checklists as a way to measure whether your project is at the stage where you are ready to involve others, and create working conditions that will nurture and benefit all.

Open Call Allignment Chart

Lawful Good Get paid to apply / get paid to participate	**Neutral Good** Apply for free / get paid to participate	**Chaotic Good** Get paid to apply / participate for free
Lawful Neutral Apply for free / maybe get paid if you're chosen ¯_(ツ)_/¯	**True Neutral** An ethical open call?!	**Chaotic Neutral** Pay to apply / maybe get paid if you're chosen ¯_(ツ)_/¯
Lawful Evil Apply for free / participate for free	**Neutral Evil** Pay to apply / get paid to participate	**Chaotic Evil** Pay to apply / participate for free

Open call checklists

1. The open call announcement

Write a clear and simple text introducing the project, key terms, timeline, and financial implications (see our Open Call Alignment Chart). Try to use accessible language so that as many people as possible can engage.

1a. The open call announcement

- What's the project brief—that is, what is the applicant responding to?
- Who are the people involved?
    - What are your guiding values? What drives your work / what's your mission & vision / what's important to you in general, or for this particular project?
    - What are your hopes & expectations for this project?
        - In what ways have you asked applicants to address these?

1b. The open call announcement

- What are your eligibility criteria?
  - Who are you including, & why?
  - Who are you excluding, & why?
  - Are applications from collectives welcome?
  - Can your project accommodate applicants with caregiving responsibilities? (For example, does a residency offer facilities for children / animal companions?)
  - Would particular limitations (on medium or artists' experience, for example) result in more targeted responses, & reduce competition?

1c. The open call announcement

- ○ What are the responsibilities of the applicant & the organisers?
- ○ What's the project timeline / what dates should applicants keep in mind?
- ○ What information / attachments are necessary?
- ○ Through which communication channels is the call being distributed / which communication channels are not being used to distribute the call?

2. Resources & transparent budgeting

When the material conditions (artist fee, materials fee, production fee, other costs, unconfirmed funding) are known by all parties, you'll likely receive more feasible responses, allowing everyone to get on the same page. This is particularly helpful for precarious and freelance workers—it can help them assess their windows of tolerance and consider if they can spend time and energy applying.

2a. Resources & transparent budgeting

- Do you provide artist fees / production fees?
- In the case of collectives applying, can you provide artist fees for each member?
- **Are there resources to support accessibility?**
    - Can caregivers / partners / personal assistants join to help?

2b. Resources & transparent budgeting

- What are the payment conditions?
  - Can you provide a work agreement / contract?
  - Is the fee paid in full / paid in stages?
  - Is the fee inclusive of taxes?
  - If the project's timeline changes / expands, will the fee also change / expand?

2c. Resources & transparent budgeting

- Can you provide other forms of compensation?
  - Food / transport reimbursements
  - Per diems
  - Childcare
  - Other currencies

3. Support for applicants & selected applicants

Have you considered different ways of supporting people interested in applying to the open call?

3a. Support for applicants & selected applicants

- ○ How can you meet accessibility needs during the application process / during the project itself?
- ○ Do you state clearly your commitment to equity & accessibility?
- ○ Have you communicated if people can call to ask questions about the application process?
- ○ Can you organise info sessions during the application process?
- ○ Can you share learnings / testimonies about past collaborations from successful applicants?

3b. Support for applicants & selected applicants

- Are there ways to support / attract candidates who have been underrepresented in your programming?
    - What steps can you take to reach these audiences?
    - What practical things can you do to support them?
        - Sliding scales / fee exemptions / scholarships
        - Sharing info about visa requirements →

3c. Support for applicants & selected applicants

- ○ Including visa costs in your budget
- ○ Support with bureaucracy / administrative tasks

4. Submission process

State clearly what materials are needed from the applicants. Consider what barriers might arise in the submission process, and how to mediate them.

4a. Submission process

- **What format(s) does the application need to follow?**
  - Can applicants choose other formats in relation to accessibility needs?
  - Can you accept a variety of formats / file sizes, to save time for applicants?
  - What about pairing up with other local / friendly organisations to create standardised application forms to save everyone time?

4b. Submission process

- Have you tested the submission process?
  - Once the application is submitted, does the applicant receive a confirmation email?
  - Have you communicated when applicants will receive the decision? What about sending the results to everyone—not just the winners?

4c. Submission process

- You could also consider a two-phase open call, starting with a short, simple application process, & then shortlist applicants to develop their ideas. Can you budget fees to support the shortlisted candidates?

- What about an anonymous open call? Do the logics that underpin anonymous recruitment apply to your project?

5. Who are you inviting into the room?

In what ways have you considered diversity, inclusion, and representation?

5a. Who are you inviting into the room?

- Are there any particular groups you want to support / uplift?
  - How do you define them? For example, some institutions might wish to work with practitioners who have been historically underrepresented in their field
  - If your approach risks instrumentalising / tokenising applicants, what steps can you take to address / learn from this both internally & in dialogue with applicants? →

5b. Who are you inviting into the room?

- ○ Can the payment schedule be flexible according to the applicants' needs (unemployment benefits / student income limits / immigration requirements)?

6. The selection panel

Who decides, and why have they been chosen? Have you made this public, so applicants know who is evaluating their work? Does it make sense to invite former participants to take part in the process? Also think about the ways you can support the evaluators.

6a. The selection panel

- What kinds of expertise / lived experiences are important for making this decision?
- What biases / assumptions may evaluators have in general, & in relation to the criteria? **How can these be acknowledged?**
    - Have you communicated how you understand conflicts of interest, & when to declare them?

6b. The selection panel

○ If you usually make decisions in-house, could external evaluators be less biased / offer new perspectives / help redistribute power / challenge accepted norms and tastes?

○ What kinds of support can you offer freelance evaluators?

6c. The selection panel

- How can you structure the selection process to support decision-making (comfortable environment / breaks / lunch & snacks / fresh air)?
- How can you create trust for collective decision-making?
    - Does the selection panel require a facilitator to guide / mediate the process?
    - Have you considered sharing safer space guidelines to ensure everyone's voices are heard, & people are aware of the space / time they take?

6d. The selection panel

- Have you prepared evaluation criteria, such as artistic merit / timeliness / realistic planning / shared values?
    - A decision matrix / structure to guide the discussion can also be helpful
- Have you ensured there's a reasonable amount of time for pre-reading / preparation, & indicated a suggested timeline for the evaluators?

7. Aftercare

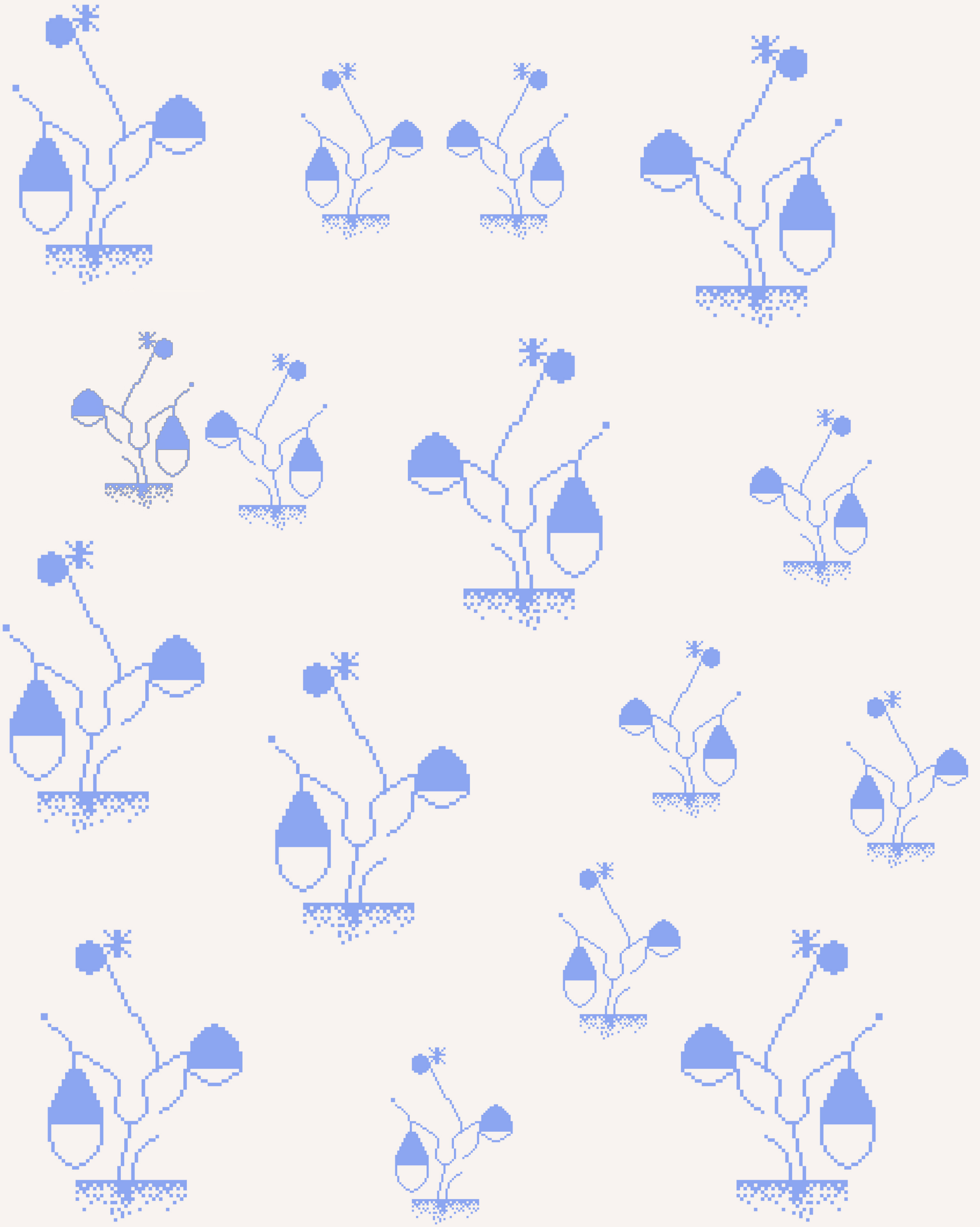
In what ways can you make this experience worthwhile for everyone involved, including the applicants that weren't selected?

7a. Aftercare

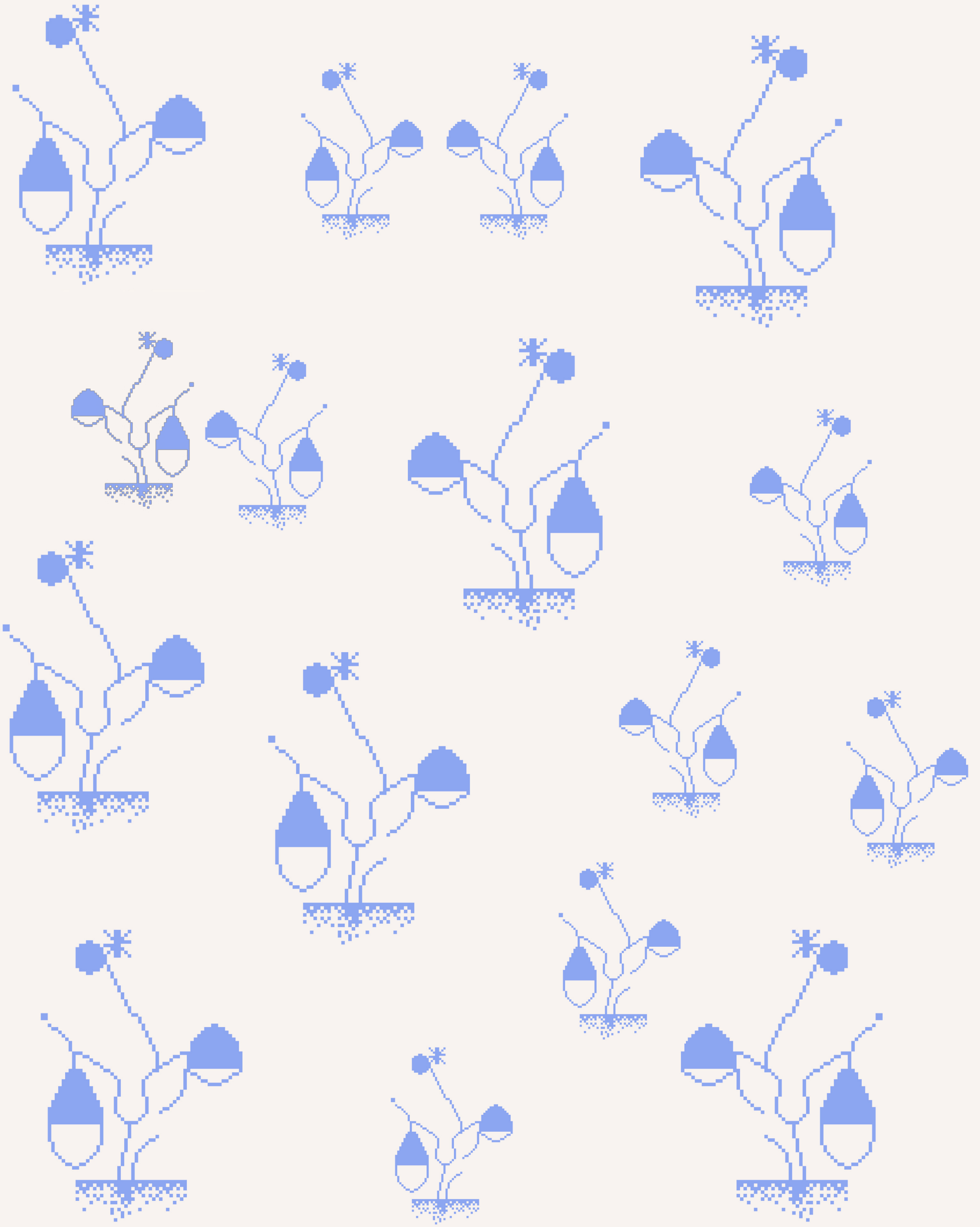
- Can you include a section where applicants provide feedback about the process, & barriers they've experienced?
    - How can you acknowledge / learn from this feedback in future calls?
    - Do you have the capacity to offer individual feedback / highlight urgencies & learnings that arose / provide an overview of the decision-making process?

7b. Aftercare

- Do you have the resources / capacity to realise exciting but unselected proposals at a later date?
- Is it possible to:
  - Introduce applicants with similar interests?
  - Promote / uplift shortlisted artists through your communication channels?
  - Recommend applicants to colleagues who might have the resources to realise the idea?



3. Studio visits



In 2022 we collaborated with a group of artists, friends, and peers to workshop a curatorial research project called Studio Visit Ethics. Studio visits are a social interaction in which an artist hosts and presents their practice to a guest (or guests) in their working space. While these professional encounters might be normalised within the cultural field, we think it's important to approach them critically.

We figured it's easier to set boundaries and ask questions when you have a prompt handy, so we developed a publication containing a flow chart and a reflective text in collaboration with graphic designer Anh Ngo. The flow chart of the studio visit process highlights some of the positions, working conditions, and often-unequal power dynamics that may be embedded in these encounters. We printed a limited-edition poster publication, and

it's also a free to download PDF, so it can easily be attached to an email when negotiating a visit, for example. We hope that anyone who organises studio visits—from a curatorial student to a residency organisation—will find it useful and share it widely.

At the end of this chapter, you can find preparatory exercises for artists to self-reflect as well as gather and share some of the information that might be important to them before welcoming a visitor. You can also find the print-at-home version of the exercises here.

Upon reflecting on this project, we later developed a tongue-in-cheek Studio Visit Bingo*—a light-hearted way to point to some of the challenges that might arise through these encounters, as well as moments worth celebrating or laughing about. This resource can be used in teaching or social contexts to spark conversations about what a kind and rewarding studio visit might look like.

* This was presented as part of our workshop Getting on the Same Page, commissioned by Atelier Kunstnerforbundet (Oslo, 2024).

STUDIO VISIT BINGO

The visitor is less interested in your work, and more interested in your scene tips and food / drink recommendations	You got a gig after a studio visit! Or you start a new collaboration	"But what does it mean?"
The studio is your bedroom, and someone has to sit on the bed	The visitor ghosts you / their promises don't materialise	You feel bad afterwards / think of the perfect thing you wish you had said
The visitor brings wine or good snacks	The visitor takes pictures without asking your permission	A vague opportunity is dangled in front of you

🎯📝🎯 STUDIO VISIT BINGO 🎯📝🎯

The visitor asks if you have anything saleable / asks for a discount	An artwork gets (accidentally) damaged	A visitor recognises something in your work you hadn't noticed
A friend hang becomes a spontaneous studio visit, which then turns into a spontaneous studio party	You don't have a studio 😅	The visitor looks at their phone the whole time
Awkward silence or feeling trapped	"So, where are you from?" or *insert microaggression*	The visitor thinks one of your publications / prints is a gift and takes it home for free

Studio visit exercises

Preferred type of visit

- Online
- IRL: In my space
- IRL: Somewhere public
- 1-on-1
- With a friend or group

Scheduling

- When can I meet?
- How much time do I have?

Logistics

- Check in about hospitality preferences / dietary restrictions
- Share instructions for wayfinding
- Touch base about pronouns / accessibility needs

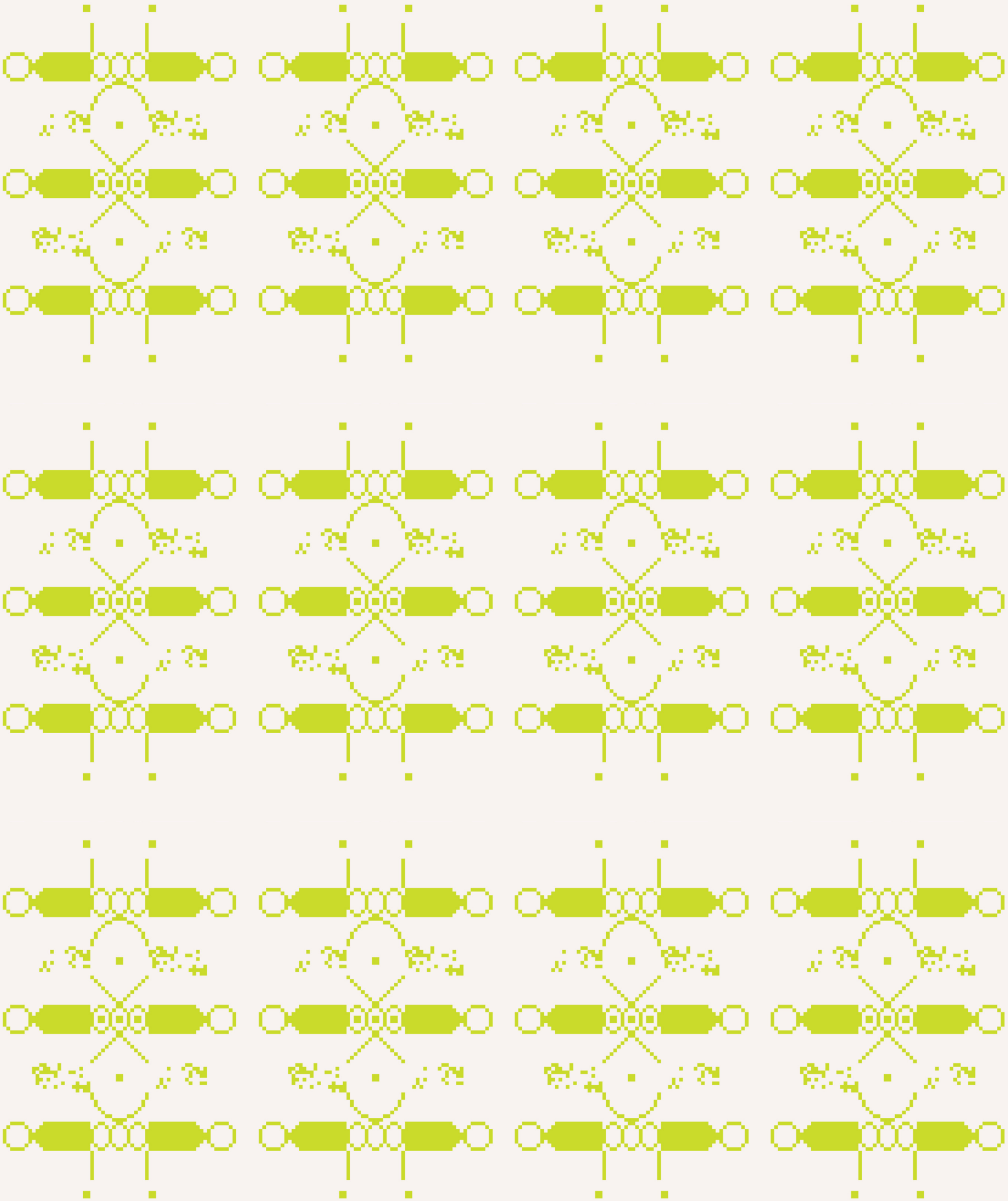
Preparations

- What do I want to know before the visit?

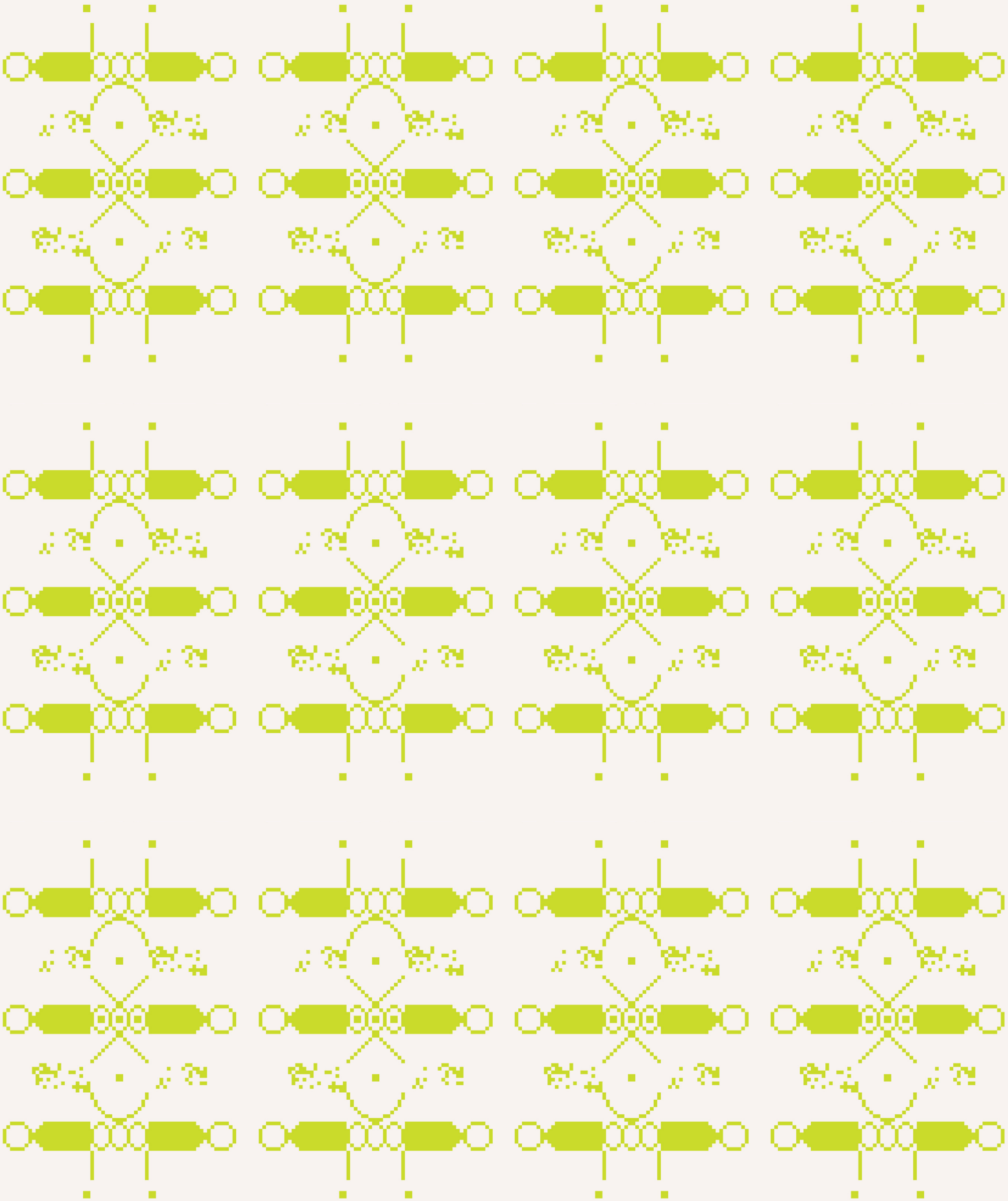
- What do you want to talk about / how should I prepare?

Preparations

- My aims & hopes for this visit



4. Negotiations



In the hypercompetitive cultural field, sometimes you feel pressured to accept any opportunity you're offered, rather than taking time to contemplate if it's a good fit for you, or negotiating the working conditions it entails. Asking questions can feel stressful, or might brand you as 'difficult' or 'ungrateful'. This is particularly pertinent when the ones negotiating are a salaried institutional representative on the one hand and a freelancer on the other. Unfortunately the power differential between the two usually benefits the institution. Negotiating and getting on the same page is also work! It's something to consider when scoping a job, offering a fee, or quoting for your services, for example.

It sometimes feels easier to just accept a token fee (see: 'dishonorarium', coined by Silvio Lorusso), and focus on doing the work (while hoping to get

paid promptly). It's just not worth taking the time to interrogate the working conditions offered, ask about other currencies, or go back and forth to try to negotiate a collaboration that benefits everyone involved. And for those juggling several short-term jobs and projects, it can be tiresome to fight to clarify the core details of a collaboration proposal, particularly when this process might end up taking longer than the job itself.

Ideally, your collaboration started with a clear invitation that clarifies the project's material conditions, and everyone is on the same page about their respective responsibilities. But remember that working dynamics will undoubtedly change and shift alongside budgets, timelines, capacities, and life situations. Let's recognise that life happens, that many things are out of our control, and we need to negotiate (and renegotiate) throughout a project. Sometimes we might even need to step away from a project, and that's okay too 🙃

In moments when collaborations give rise to tension and conflict, let's try to challenge the idea

How can conflict become transformational & a site for growth?

that conflict is taboo, and remember to keep checking in throughout the collaborative process.

The following exercises and prompts have been developed to help guide and normalise negotiation conversations: asking questions, sharing needs, and negotiating the terms of a collaboration. You can also find the print-at-home version of the exercises here.

To prepare, we first suggest thinking through and naming all the different types of labour you do for a project, and the amounts of time they take. This will help when communicating your boundaries around schedules and responsiveness. Then consider what needs to be shared, how to respectfully recognise people's different life situations, and what aspects of communication, language, and accessibility are important to you. You might wish to share an access rider too.

If you love for everyone's needs and expectations to be clearly articulated in an agreement, then you might be interested in our research into feminist agreement-making practices. This 2020–21 project was a collaboration with Riikka Kuoppala from Vegan & Legal, in which we advocated for equality amongst collaborators, recognising power differentials, and understanding an agreement as a negotiation process to ensure both parties' needs are met. This slideshow and its accompanying notes share ways to approach agreement-making; the presentation ends with a sample agreement for an artist commission.

Needs exercises

1. Visualising your labour

Clearly articulating the routines and demands of your current projects and commitments can help you plan realistically, set boundaries, and encourage others to respect your time.

Try to list as many regular activities as possible, and consider many kinds of labour (artistic, administrative, communication, research, planning, logistics, social, care, reproductive, health, community, advocacy, volunteering, family and kin, etc.)

This is also a way to visibilise the work we do as independent cultural workers, and recognise the amount of invisible labour we do on a daily basis.

1. Visualising your labour

2a. Email signature

Adding a signature to your emails is a helpful way to communicate your work schedule and capacity to others. It can also serve to highlight other aspects of how you work that might be relevant. You might want to include:

Name, pronouns

Email + website + social media

I work on: [list days]

I read my emails on: [list days]

2b. Email signature

It might take up to ____ days to reply

I spend ___ % of my time on this work / job

Other notes like:

- “If your email is urgent, please mark it as such, and I will do my best to prioritise it”
- “I share this email address / job position with...”
- Your personal / family needs at the moment that might influence your responsiveness

3a. Coming together & sharing needs

Prompts to communicate your needs when introducing yourself

- **(Everyday life) things that are important to me, that I'd like to share**

- **How I best process information**

3b. Coming together & sharing needs

Prompts to communicate your needs when introducing yourself

- **How I like to receive feedback**

- **My ideal conditions / I am at my best when**

4a. How to work together?

Prompts to structure a collaborative process

- **How do we imagine this collaboration will take place?**

- **Reasons we want to work together**

4b. How to work together?

Prompts to structure a collaborative process

- **What skills can we offer each other?**

- **What values / principles are meaningful for us?**

4c. How to work together?

Prompts to structure a collaborative process

- **Can we agree on how to equally distribute fun / less fun responsibilities?**

- **Can we speak about our different working conditions, & how to support each other?**

4d. How to work together?

Prompts to structure a collaborative process

- **What resources / other currencies can we offer each other?**

- **How can we incorporate pleasure, fun, & celebration in this project?**

5. Communication

Prompts to navigate communication and expectations

- **My preferred method / platform for communication is**

- **I'm available to communicate during**

- **These are my predicted response times**

- **Social media preferences / energy for using social media**

6a. Language & accessibility

Let's discuss...

- Language and terminology that's important to me

6b. Language & accessibility

Let's discuss...

- **Terms that might be hurtful or problematic**

- **Forms of support I appreciate**

6c. Language & accessibility

Let's discuss...

- **Accessibility needs**

CONFLICT AND TENSION

At some point, negotiations—and collaborative processes—might develop into disagreements, arguments, or conflicts. Unresolved disputes are stressful for everyone, and can become more stressful the longer they remain unresolved. While most of us might feel ill-equipped to deal with conflict, the individualistic nature of each situation means there's no such thing as a conflict 'expert', or a fail-safe technique for resolving conflict. Being conscious of when a situation has become polarised is important, and a good indicator that mediation could help you get on the same page. Sometimes a facilitator or 'neutral' person in the room can be helpful for conflict de-escalation too.

While it might feel challenging in the moment, persisting in talking through difficulty can build goodwill, and result in preserving—or perhaps even enhancing—relationships. Conflict can also be transformational and a site for growth—it ushers in new ways of being in the world, understanding oneself, and relating to others.

We recognise that conflict exists across a spectrum. It can arise when feeling frustrated with pointless-seeming meetings, people ignoring deadlines, and daily frictions; the tools we offer here are imagined to be relevant for this end of the spectrum. But conflict can also snowball into abusive, threatening, or violent situations where the power differential precludes any kind of resolution. In cases like these (when you feel, for example, threatened, endangered, unable to continue) it's important to reach out for support and not be alone. Artist union Taku made this guide for dealing with harassment and inappropriate treatment in the Finnish context, and it's worth searching for similar tools in your context.

We invite you to reflect on what a mediation or conflict-resolution session might look like for you and your collaborators. This could take many forms, a lot of time, and a willingness to acknowledge other people's positions. Self-reflection and consulting with others could prompt us to find ways to compromise and breathe through moments of tension. Reaching a resolution may also vary a lot depending on the kind of work you are doing, the context, as well as the people involved, how they're connected to each other, and how they relate to conflict. Acknowledging that our response to conflict could fluctuate over time might also be helpful.

We hope that the following lists of questions and prompts might aid you when needing to address conflict in a collaborative process.

I'M SENSING TENSION IN THE AIR: WHAT DO I DO?

- I can tolerate the situation
- I avoid talking about it
- I feel stressed
- I can initiate a conversation to acknowledge the tension
- I can lead a mediation discussion

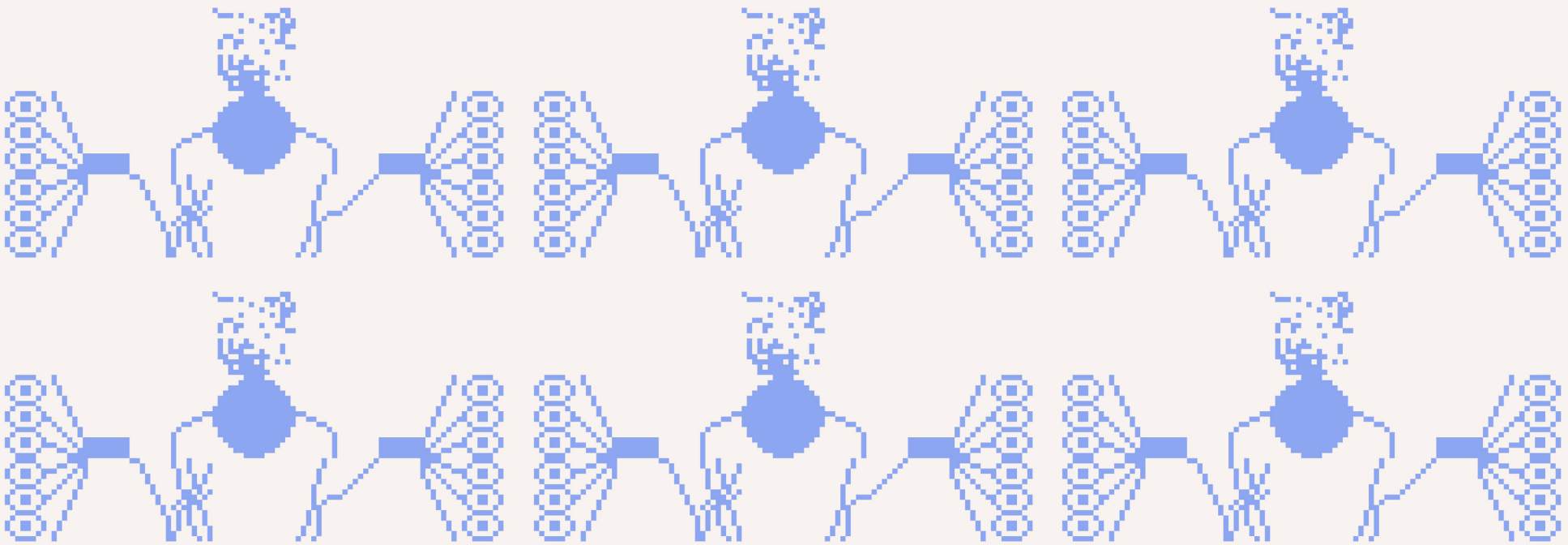
IF YOU'RE HESITATING OR DON'T FEEL CAPABLE OF INITIATING A CONVERSATION JUST YET

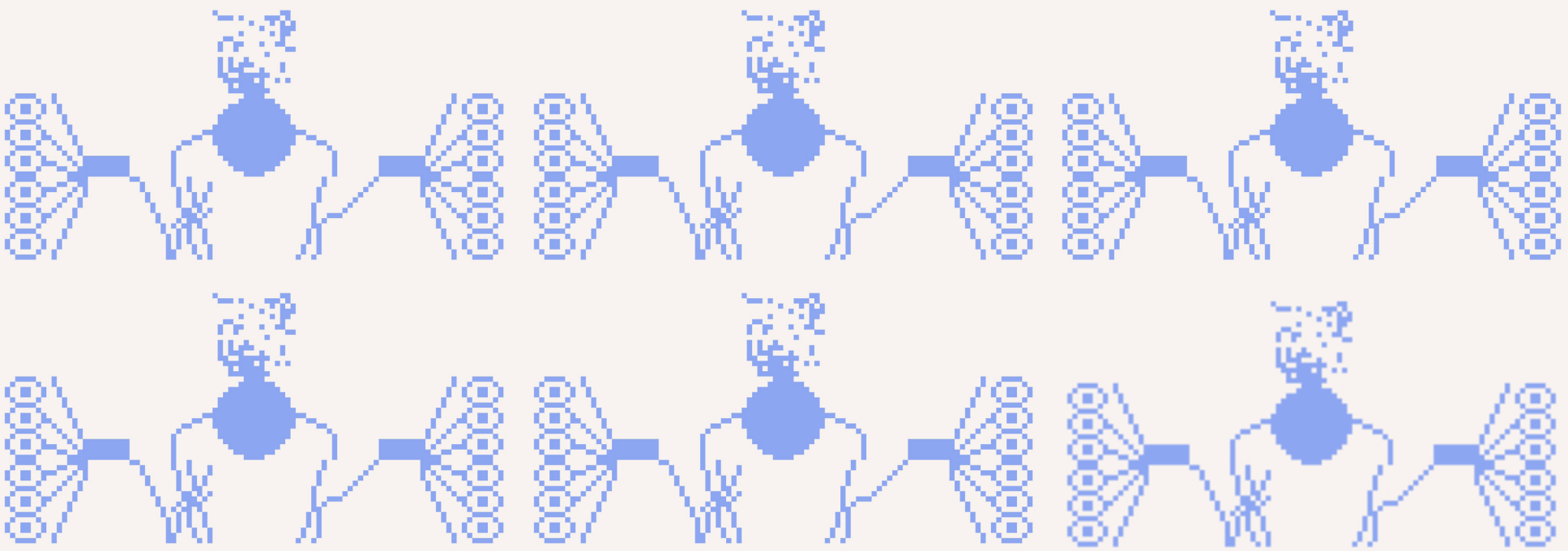
- Can I ask for some time to think things through / sit with my emotions?
- Have I communicated how long I need to reflect, & when I will get back to this?
- How do I react when I'm hurt?
- How do I feel knowing that I've hurt someone?
- Can I empathise with how the other person / people might be feeling?
- Am I being avoidant / defensive / angry / ungracious? What do I want to do next with these emotions?

WHEN YOU'RE READY TO LISTEN AND HAVE A CONVERSATION

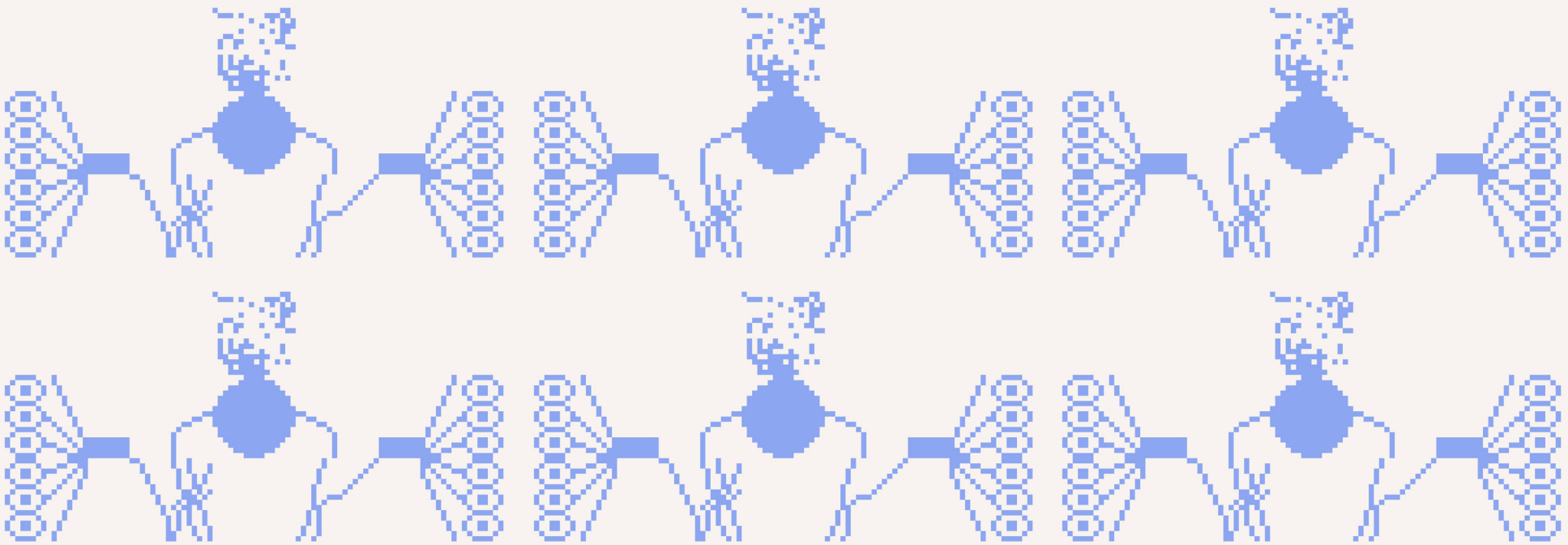
- What do I want out of this conversation?
- What forms of communication work best for me in this moment?
- How do we structure our conversation so that we all feel heard?
- Do we need facilitation? Who can facilitate?
- What do we wish to be acknowledged?
- How do we sit with difficulty?
- Does apologising feel hard right now?
- How did our behaviour affect each other?
- What steps can we take to fix this?
- What happens next?

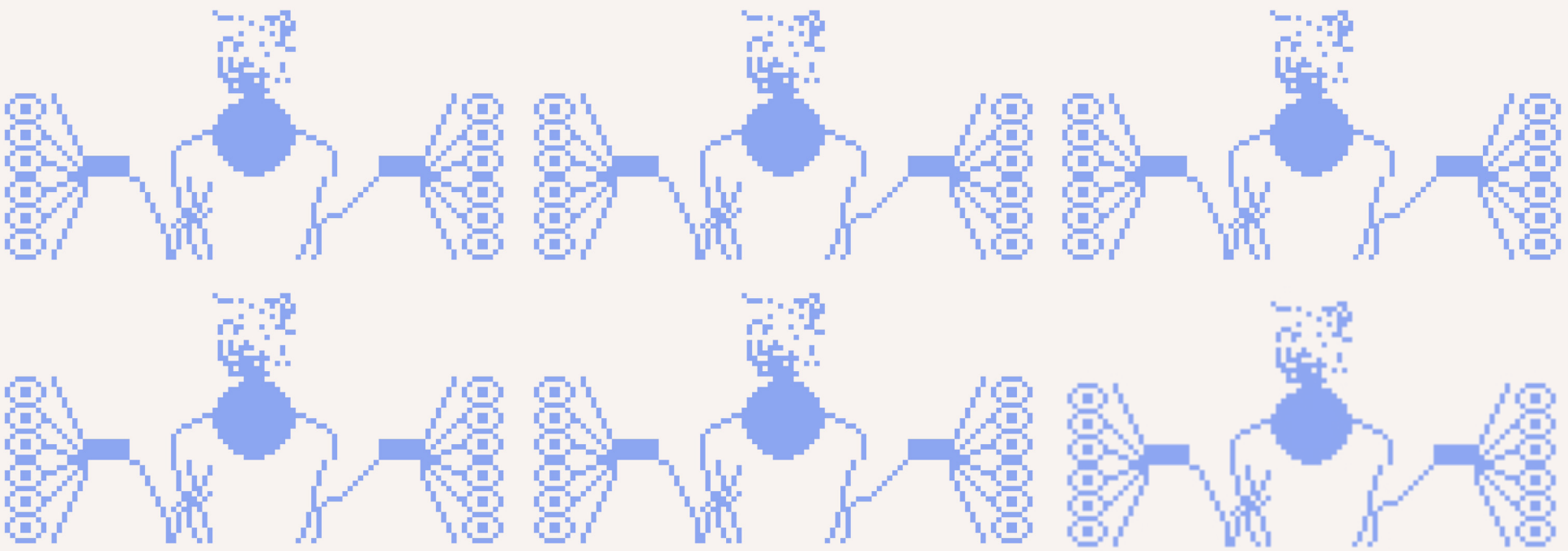
Let's accept that conflict might not be fully resolved, or that it might still linger in different ways for a while... But by recognising it, talking about it, and checking in with each other, we can find ways to move on and hopefully continue collaborating.





5. Other currencies





Parallel to our work advocating for a future where artists and cultural workers are fairly paid for their labour, we also dream of a world where the currencies we can offer each other are more than just money. We want different types of labour—some of which are harder to quantify than others—to be recognised and valued. And we wish to see a more sustainable and long-term distribution of resources that prioritises collective well-being over individual comfort.

Working in the art field often means that budgets are low, and many cultural workers are underpaid and overworked. While we wait in hope for solutions like the widespread implementation of universal basic income, what other strategies can we explore to support ourselves and others to widen our windows of tolerance? 🪟

How can we use gift economies as support structures?

So, when faced with the choice of working for free because there's no budget—or not working at all because there's no budget—we want to figure out how to conduct rewarding collaborations that transcend monetary currencies. In saying that, we of course acknowledge that we all need money to cover everyday living costs, and it remains urgent to keep advocating for paid jobs in the cultural sector.

Inspired by Robin Wall Kimmerer's *The Serviceberry*, we want to explore how gift economies can be used to support each other. As she reminds us, 'the currency in a gift economy is relationship, which is expressed as gratitude, as interdependence and the ongoing cycles of reciprocity'.[3] When we talk about 'relational currencies' in the following pages, we don't mean to frame them within competitive capitalist logics, or suggest individuals approach others opportunistically—instead we wish to ground ourselves in a gift economy that nurtures community bonds. Let's be generous with giving time and attention to others, and kindly share webs of social connections 🌐

So, while gift economies are not a new idea or practice, can we work actively with them in the cultural field? What other currencies can circulate amongst us to supplement low fees, zero-hour contracts, and project-based work, for example? And can such practices of reciprocal exchange and peer-to-peer support systems be used to strengthen our collective capacities, and enable us to upend capitalist definitions of work relations?

In the lists that follow, we try to put forward different categories and examples of other currencies that could be used as alternative or supporting payments in our field. There are of course many currencies and skills out there—listed here are some we've exchanged or offered in our practice over the years. Our aim is to map material and immaterial resources that are all around us, and to be creative—and sometimes a bit cheeky—to offer a wide array of options.

Relational currencies

Interpersonal ways to recognise and support collaborators

- Letters of recommendation
- Letters of intent
- Letters of support
- Memoranda of understanding
- Certificates of employment
- Documents required for immigration processes
- Good faith whisper networks
- Feedback / consultations
- Peer reviews / group critiques
- Sharing references / sources
- Studio visits
- Compliments / gratitude
- Surprises / gifts
- Taking on care work
- Taking on reproductive labour
- Staying in touch
- Not ghosting 👻
- Uplifting / advocating for others

Skills exchange

Trading knowledge, expertise, or talents

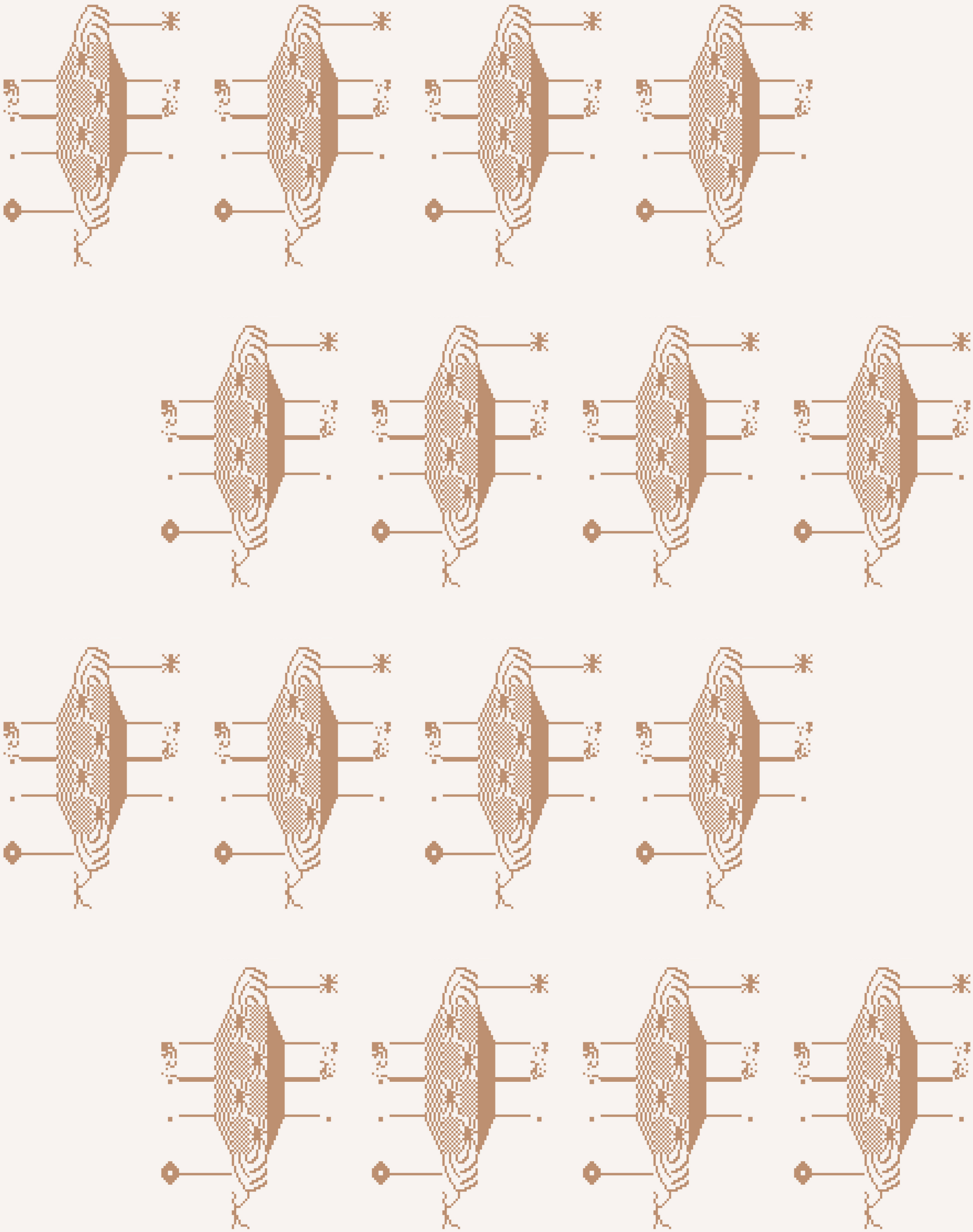
- Teaching
- Mentoring
- Photography
- Video documentation
- Sound engineering & audio production
- Web design
- Coding
- Editing
- Copy-editing
- Proofreading
- Writing
- Text feedback
- Publishing
- Graphic design
- Illustration work
- Photo editing
- Accounting & financial admin
- Translation
- Interpretation
- Language tandems
- Curatorial work
- Installation support
- Event support
- Tech support
- Hosting
- Cooking & bartending
- Social media

Redistributive currencies

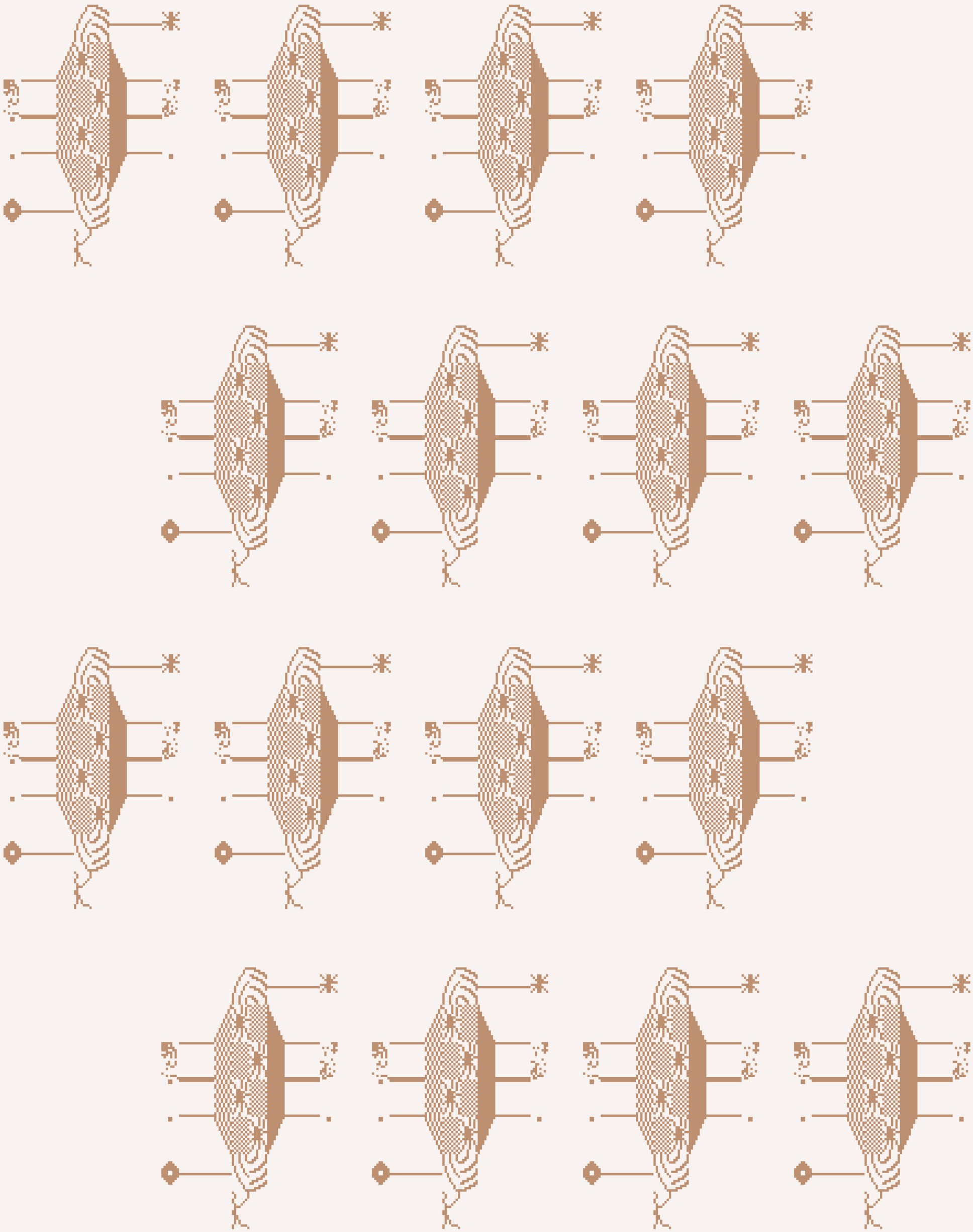
Worldbuilding through redistributing resources

- Free tickets / season passes
- Discount codes
- Thank-you dinners / drinks
- Sharing space / facilities
- Sharing equipment / tools
- Sharing special-event clothes
- Printing
- Sharing garden harvests & food
- A share of a production run (publications / prints / merch)
- Fee-waiving / sliding-scale price lists
- Access to institutional databases
- Access to media lists
- Artwork gifts
- Public transport tickets
- Taxi vouchers
- Paying for meeting hospitality
- Software subscriptions
- Streaming services
- Internet / phone bills
- Grocery store vouchers
- Studio rent

One note: while we encourage making use of non-monetary currencies in collaborative encounters, we strongly invite you to be mindful of using this concept ethically. When individual precarious actors working in precarious contexts come together, and don't have access to budgets or funding, skills exchange or redistributive currencies might be the only way they have to remunerate everyone's work. But those working in institutions and other larger organisations—who often have full-time salaries and other benefits—shouldn't use non-monetary currencies to replace actual fees when commissioning work. Institutions have a wealth of resources that can easily be shared—like space, equipment, and hospitality—and redistributing those to others outside the institution is a bold, meaningful, and solidaric action to undertake. These resources should be used generously to supplement low fees or unideal working conditions.



6. Acknowledge-ment practices



One of the practices FCH has cultivated is to pause at the end of a working day and sincerely thank each other for the time and contributions we've shared. We consciously choose to work as a collective in a field organised to accommodate and uplift individual practices—for us, collectivity is where change happens. We also enjoy sharing our work, skills, ideas, and dreams with people we trust, and with whom we have nurtured long-term relationships. We resist reductive narratives that centre the individual, and exclude, ignore, and invisibilise the labour of the many. What about prioritising the *we*, and not just *me*? 🤓

We encourage you to loudly express gratitude for the work, efforts, and presence of those you collaborate with, and those who've supported you. Acknowledging everyone who participated in a project can be a generous and thoughtful act.

But as mentioned before, needs are always changing, so it's good to check in at the end of the project and confirm if and how others want to be credited or acknowledged.

Acknowledgement can also be thought of expansively—why not generously celebrate those you're inspired by, and those who have influenced you? How can you showcase the intellectual genealogies you're aligned with, and the thinkers, arguments, and positions that came before you, or who are operating alongside you? Consider practising hyperauthorship, or hyperreal citing, and its principles of unconditional inclusion. It can be nourishing and generative to gather and represent the tangential thinking that underpins your project into dense spiderwebs of connection and appreciation 🕷️🕸️🕷️

In saying that, it's good to remember that acknowledgement is an act of worldbuilding that is never neutral. The 'we' is always shifting, and different coalitions of people and knowledges are upheld at different times. Particular voices might be enshrined or aligned with particular political

positions, while others might be oppressed or silenced, either strategically or unconsciously. Let's follow writer Sara Ahmed in striving to live (and practise) a feminist life when she asks us to consciously consider which 'feminist bricks' we use in our worldbuilding.

To get you started, the next pages have some prompts to consider when compiling a list of acknowledgements.

GIVING CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE

- **Who contributed, & how?**
- **How can I credit them?**
    - Remember to always check in about crediting preferences with collaborators—do they want to be named, & in what ways?
    - In the case of trans & non-binary collaborators, names & pronouns might change or be changing over time; **this text** provides some best-practice pointers for how to navigate this in academic contexts
- **Where do I credit them?**
- **What forms of labour are usually given credit?**
- **What forms of labour are usually invisibilised?**
- **Whose voices can be validated through acknowledging them in this context?**
- **How to reference indirect accomplices?**

REFERENCING AND WORLDBUILDING

- What have I been reading / watching / listening to, & how has it shaped my thinking?
- Who am I recognising / acknowledging / citing, & why them?
- From what position(s) do they speak?
- Who might be missing?
- Through which lenses do they gaze?
- Who else is in their orbit?
- Whose voices have traditionally been enshrined within these fields of knowledge?
- Who is in the canon, & who is not?
- What kinds of knowledges am I privileging, & what knowledges am I ignoring?

Let's celebrate those we're inspired by, & those who have influenced us

DOCUMENTATION AS A TOOL FOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

While feminist worldbuilding is a lifelong and often invisible practice, documentation is one way to directly recognise and archive the process of working with others.

Exhibitions, events, performances, publications, and other works are often documented via photography, video, social media, or website archives. It's best practice to discuss with your collaborators or people in the room how everyone prefers their work or presence to be documented, acknowledged, and shared. On the following pages you can find prompts to structure this discussion with others.

SOME POINTS TO CONSIDER

- Have you discussed with your collaborators what aspects of your collective work are important to capture, & how?
- Have you agreed on what's mentioned in image credits / image descriptions? Do you need a short version for promotional contexts, & a more detailed version for archiving purposes?
- Have you agreed on who can use the documentation, in what contexts, & the limitations on use? You might wish to include a line about respecting 'the moral rights of the artist', which means that authorship must be recognised, & integrity must be maintained (for example, an image shouldn't be cropped or edited without the photographer's consent).
- Have you obtained consent from all participants when photographing public events?

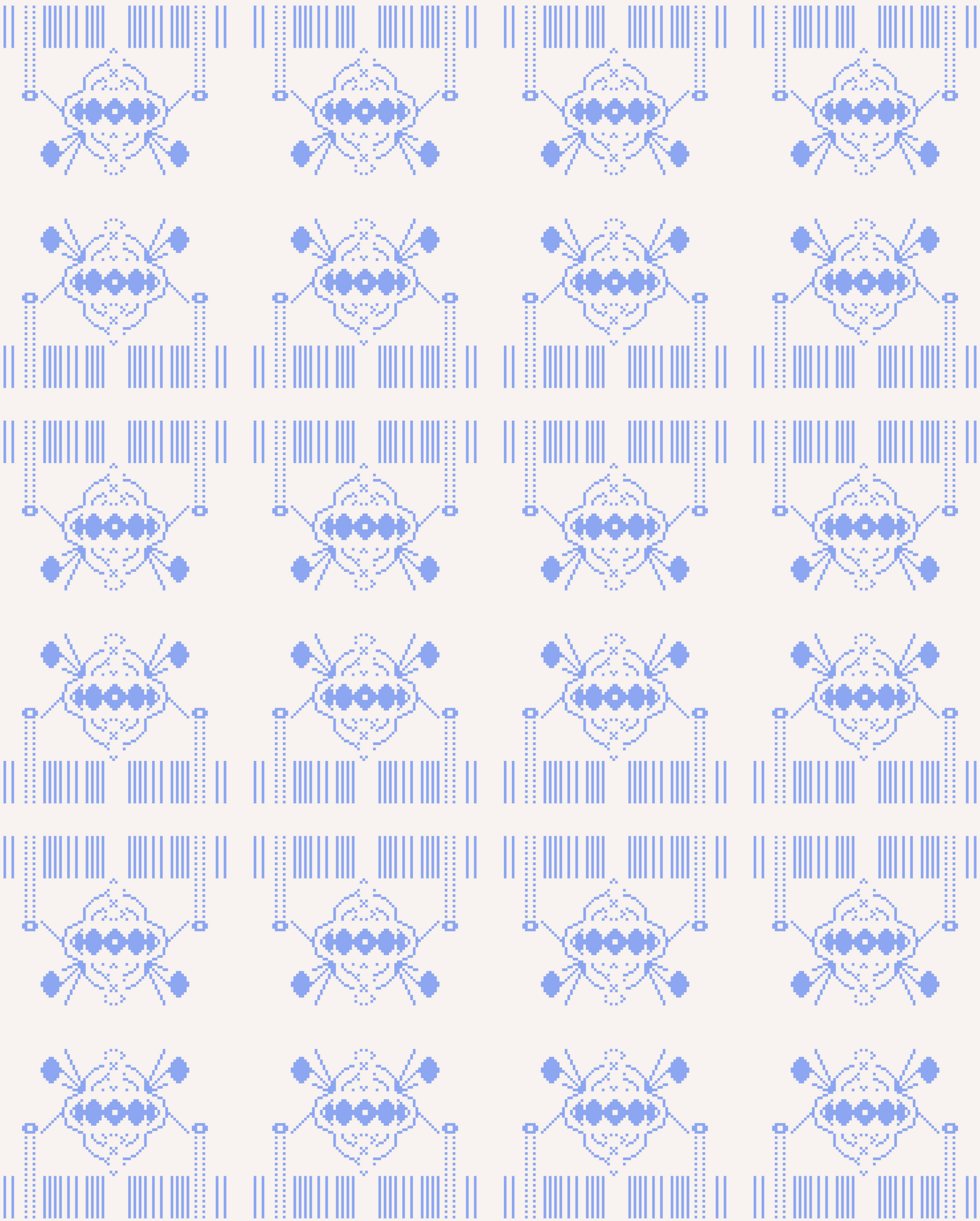
- In small-group situations, you can ask for people's emails & social media handles, so you can check in about what can be posted or used.

- Larger events can be challenging, but have you clearly communicated how the event will be documented? You can also display this information at the venue or on social media.

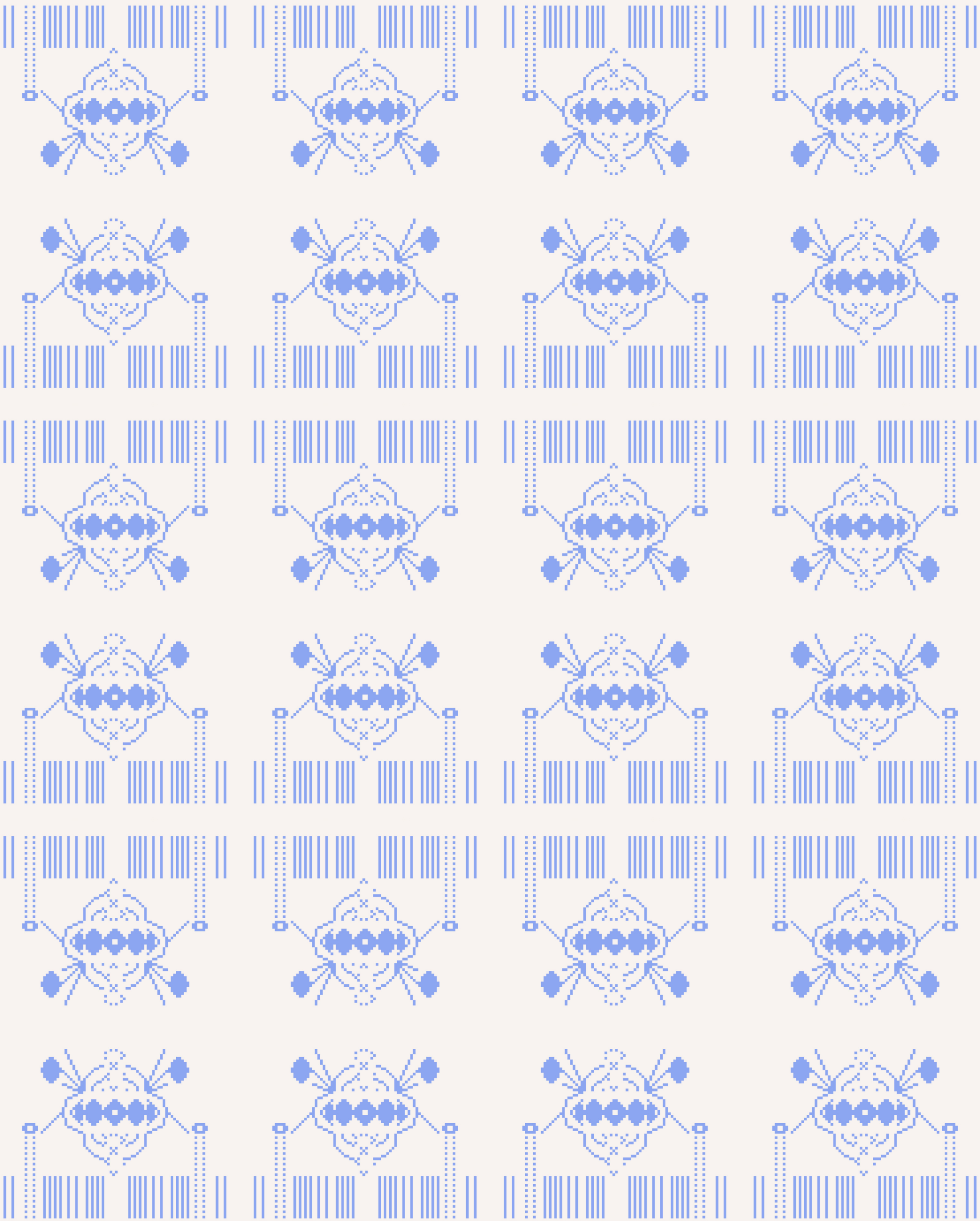
WHAT ABOUT INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY?

There are also legal frameworks to acknowledge authorship and intellectual property. While copyright enshrines the rights of the individual, copyleft allows space to distribute work more freely and collectively while still crediting original authorship. For example, FCH's publications are published under a Creative Commons licence that supports active non-commercial redistribution, because we hope that our work can reach as many people as possible.

In some contexts, we encourage you to be aware about the rights concerning authorship and the distribution of your work. What kind of protections do you need, and which legal frameworks can provide that? Many sample copyright clauses circulating in the art field don't protect the artist, so be critical about what you're signing, and don't hesitate to negotiate and propose alternative wording.



7. Reflection



The easiest stage of a project to skip is reflection. It's good to take time and space to reflect, and reconvene when everyone's had time to celebrate, rest, sit with emotions, and process their feelings. If needed, you could also return to the concept of windows of tolerance to evaluate where you are. In many instances, we tend to adhere to the capitalist demand to keep on producing, and quickly move on to the next urgency, without making time to share our reflections and learnings. Or maybe there are tensions and challenges that we haven't addressed, and it's easier to just drift away than deal with difficulty.

When you start working together, it's good to include a reflection session at the conclusion of your project schedule. Preparing for this—perhaps through normalising regular feedback sessions throughout the project—allows you to work towards

building a trusting, vulnerable, generous, and open environment in which hopefully everyone feels comfortable participating. The prompts in the '**Conflict**' section can also be helpful if people find it hard to open up about difficulty.

If people are unprepared, they might feel hesitant to give genuine feedback, or feel that it's not worth the time or effort. In cases when the working dynamic has individual practitioners on one hand and institutional representatives on the other, the power differentials can make it especially hard to give honest and generative feedback. An institutional project leader could share some talking points beforehand so everyone has time to prepare.

The prompts in this chapter can help facilitate a structured conversation about what you've done together, and what you might hope to do next. It's a way to keep the communication going, tend to the relationships you've built, and learn what could be done differently in the future.

LET'S TALK ABOUT THE GOOD THINGS...

- What went well?
- What did we enjoy?
- What are we proud of?
- How did our collaboration enrich the project?

LET'S TALK ABOUT THE TOUGH THINGS...

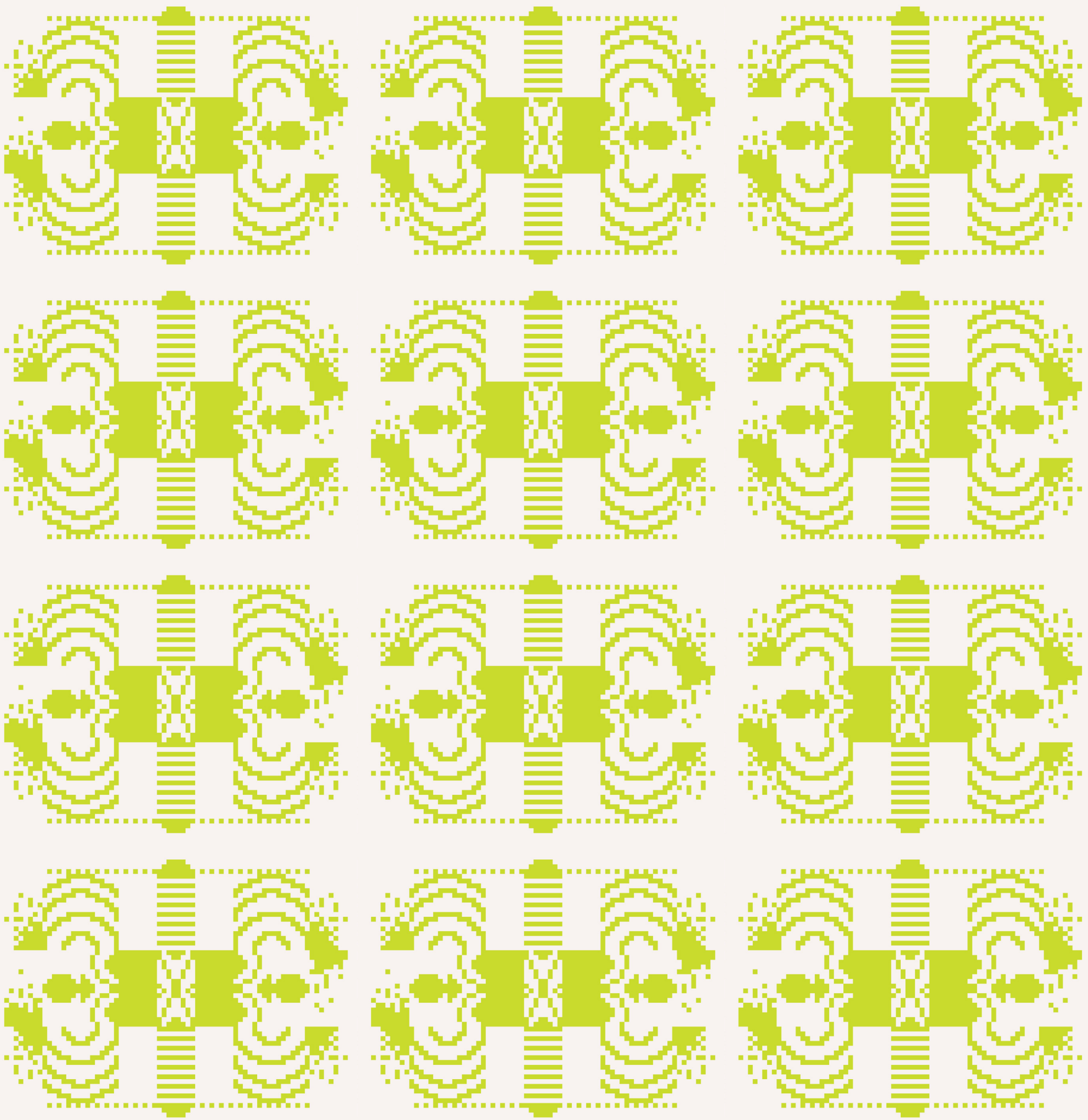
- What was challenging?
- What could have been done better?
- Was something stressful?
- Was something hurtful?

LET'S TALK ABOUT THE LEARNINGS...

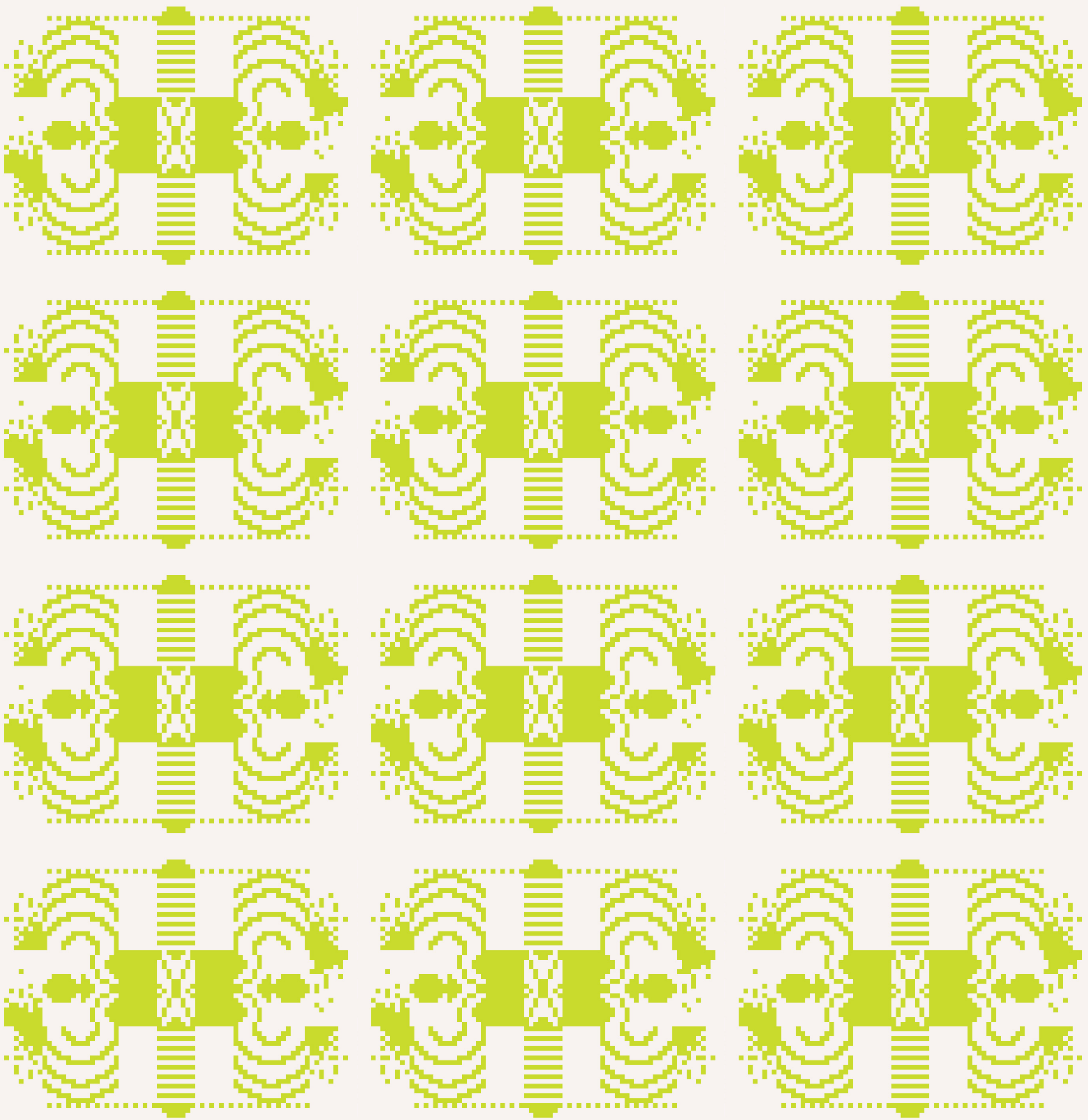
- What did we learn about ourselves?
- What did we learn about our audiences?
- What did we learn about our practices?
- What did we learn about how we work together?

LET'S TALK ABOUT WHAT'S NEXT...

- How do we archive what we've done together?
- What's still on the to-do list (grant report, website updates, social media thank-yous)?
- Are we interested in developing another project together? Let's leave this to ferment and come together when it feels right
- Let's be there for each other in future 🤝



Afterword



This publication was written after many years working as a Helsinki-based collective in the Finnish cultural field, as well as in the Nordic-Baltic countries, thanks to various collaborations with artists and cultural workers based in that region. We are conscious that in this context, there are many resources available from private, public, and inter-governmental bodies that support paid opportunities for those working in the art field. FCH actually exists thanks to many years of receiving funding in different forms, and we are profoundly grateful to have access to these particular material conditions.

We say this while recognising that the terms ‘ideal’ and ‘unideal’ that permeate this publication are subjective and context-dependent. We nonetheless hope that they can become a useful frame of reference for others working in cultural

fields around the world, and that the tools and methodologies we have shared here can be adapted, metamorphosed, and reformulated by many others who want to build better and more just futures.

While creating change might feel daunting, especially when our screens livestream catastrophe after catastrophe everyday, we are reminded of what bell hooks wrote about hope: 'Hopefulness empowers us to continue our work for justice even as the forces of injustice may gain greater power for a time'.[4] And so we hope that *Windows of Tolerance* can offer some guidance along the many paths that lead towards change and solidarity.

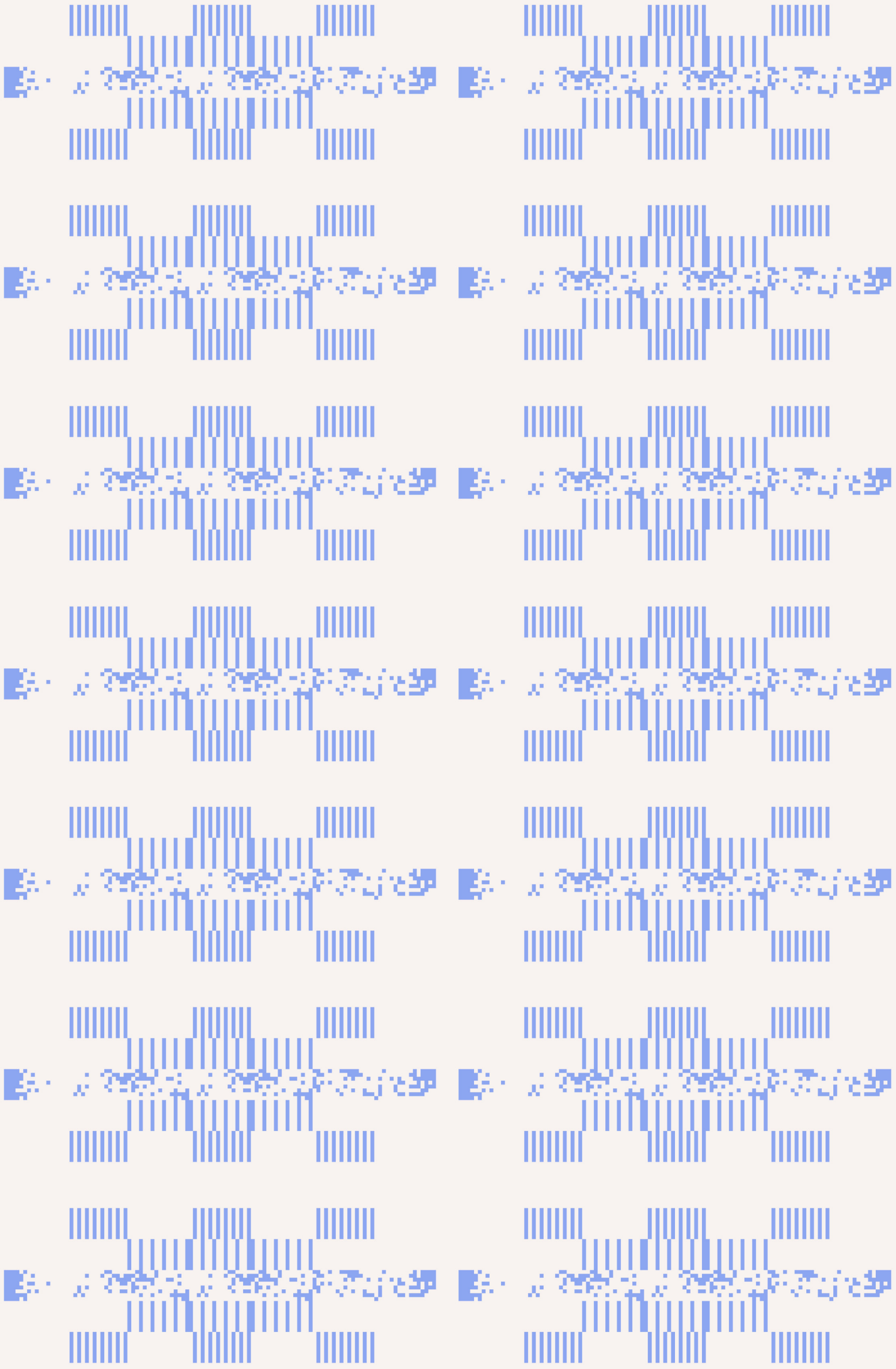
ENDNOTES

1. Francesca Coin. "[Interview] Kimberlé Crenshaw: Liberty. Equality. Intersectionality. an Antidote against Fascism." Lefteast, June 26, 2020.

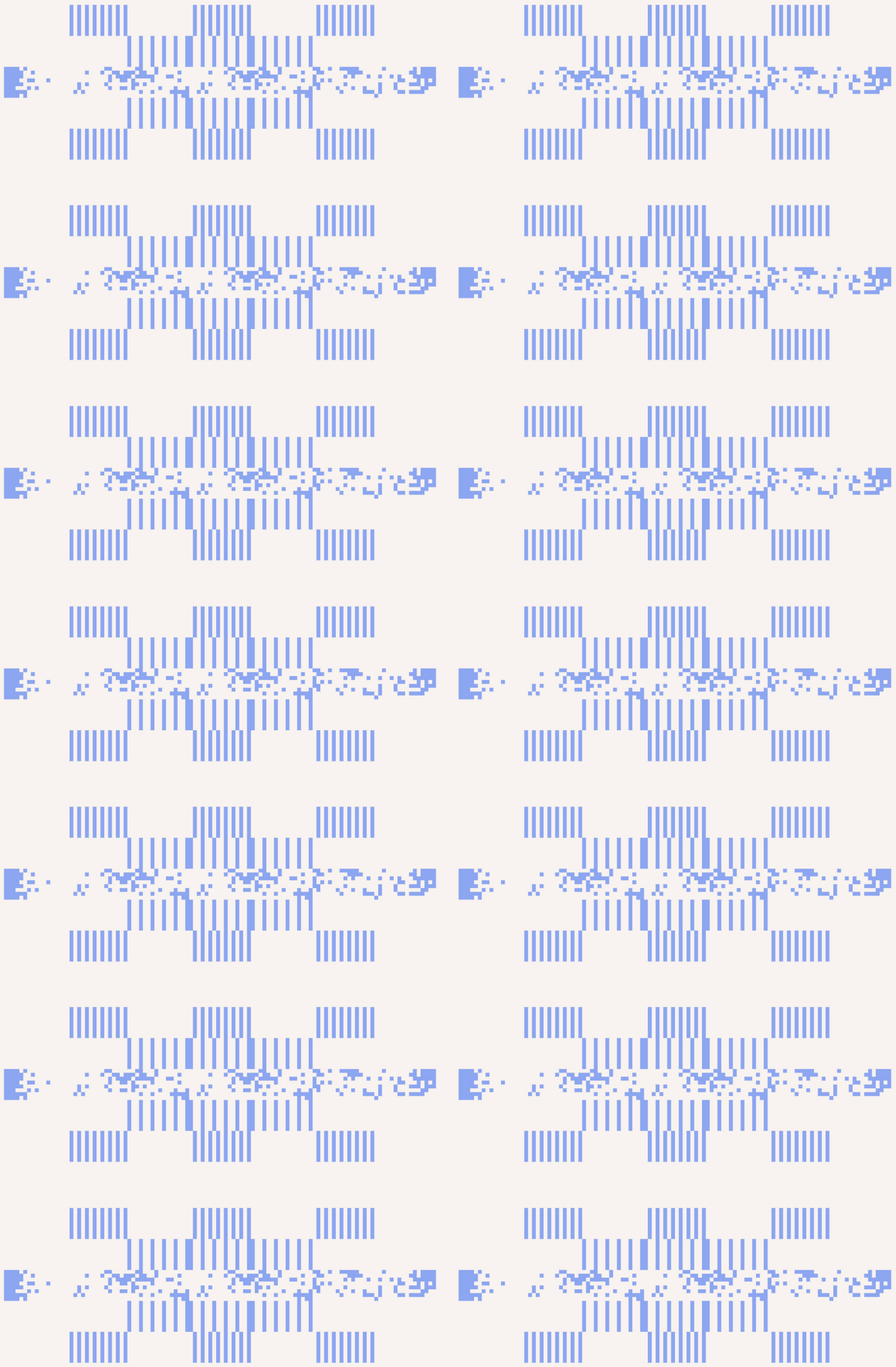
2. Paul Raekstad & Sofa Saio Gradin. 2020. *Prefigurative Politics*. Polity Press (Cambridge).

3. Robin Wall Kimmerer. 2024. *The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World*. Scribner (New York).

4. bell hooks. 2003. *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*. Routledge (New York).



Resources



We've gathered a list of some of the resources that have inspired, informed, and guided the development of this publication and other recent FCH projects. It goes without saying that this captures a partial, incomplete, and ongoing research process. Some resources assemble around **KEY WORDS**, while others form interrelated lists alongside standalone topics. We share them in the spirit of transparency and acknowledgement, with the hope that following these different lines of inquiry will sow other seeds of intersectional feminist working practices within the cultural field.

ABOUT THE TITLE

We started thinking about the metaphorical potential of the term **WINDOWS OF TOLERANCE** after discussing this infographic in a group chat.

This prompted further reading, and speculations about its practical applications in different art worlds.

In practice, the SUDS anxiety thermometer can be helpful for tracking the fluctuations of your window of tolerance. This visualisation (2023) of Christine Miserandino's Spoon theory (2003) could be a helpful way to measure the finite and fluctuating units of energy that a (chronically ill) person has to offer per day. And the Trauma Informed Toolkit (2013) directs service-providers and project leaders towards research and guidelines for working supportively with people affected by trauma.

OUR PRACTICE

We often refer to the Wheel of Privilege and Power (2022), a tool developed by the Government of Canada to visualise **INTERSECTIONALITY**.
It can help to pinpoint how power and privilege operate in relation to thirteen categories of social identity, including Citizenship, Wealth, Gender, and Language. When we ask 'who is in the room and under what conditions?', we invite you to

reflect on these categories, and consider whose **LIVED EXPERIENCES** are privileged in a project, while whose might be **(UNDER)REPRESENTED**. A recent example of putting this thinking into practice is the Artist's Salary Statement (2024), which reflects on the distribution of working grants in the Icelandic context.

Often, responding to needs requires currencies of time, planning, listening, and consideration more so than money. For further reading about **ACCESSIBILITY** theory and practice, check out Leah Clements, Alice Hattrick, and Lizzy Rose's Access Docs for Artists; Mia Mingus' Access Intimacy (2011); Jessie Bullivant and Jemina Lindholm's *Access Riders* (2021); Iarlaith Ní Fheorais' Access Toolkit for Artworkers (2024); Carolyn Lazard's *Accessibility in the Arts: A Promise and a Practice* (2019); RA Walden's *A Primer on Working With Disabled Group Members* (2021); the important work of Johanna Hedva: sick woman theory (2016), Disability Access Rider (2019), and *How to Tell When We Will Die: On Pain, Disability, and Doom* (2024)

Like Abraham Joshua Heschel said, we believe that “words create worlds”, so much of our work involves interrogating, questioning and researching **LANGUAGE**, guided by tools like these:

- The Micropedia of Microaggressions (2021) aims to help people learn about harmful and hurtful language without fear of judgement. Its real world examples of everyday microaggressions might be a tough read, but they could be useful for prompting reflection, and during intergenerational dialogue, for example.

- Pronoun Go-Round (2021) provides questions to consider and best-practice examples when facilitating the sharing of pronouns in classrooms and gatherings. An extended version of this guide—including images, audio, video interviews, and resources—can be found here.

- The Radical Copyeditor has for many years prompted us to think carefully about the implications of language and its political power.

- Where are you from? (2018-) is an art and storytelling project created by Sabina McKenna to celebrate, educate, and raise awareness about cultural identities. The project invites contributors to share their **LIVED EXPERIENCES**, tactics, and reflections on this question as tools for solidarity. It's also one reference that informed our commissioned research about asking this question amongst international visitors for the artist-run residency Tuo Tuo in Joutsa, Finland.

We've been inspired by Paul Raekstad & Sofa Saio Gradin's book on **PREFIGURATIVE POLITICS**, and this Upstream podcast episode discussing some of its themes. For everyday ways to put prefiguravism into practice, we encourage you to spend time with:

- A manifesto for radical care or how to be a human in the arts (2022) by curator Tian Zhang that reflects on power dynamics, reciprocity, disappointment, and hope, amongst practices of radical care.

- *ArtWorkers: Material Conditions and Labour Struggles in Contemporary Art Practice* (2015), which asks 'how to construct labour struggles and political imaginaries from the precarious subject position of art workers, without isolating these struggles into the occupational sector of visual art?'

- Guidelines & Info Checklist (2025) by #StopHatredNow, which guides organisers to develop considerate working practices.

- *Love in a F*cked Up World* (2025), lawyer and activist Dean Spade's guide for combatting cultural scripts, and strengthening interpersonal relationships.

- Migrants in Culture's excellent Saturday School archive of anti-abolitionist talks.

- School of Commons (2017-present), a self-organised peer-led study program for knowledge production whose ways & workings make use of commons-based methods and practices, and other non-hierarchical strategies.

- Seeds for Change's written guides for direct action, group work, and consensus decision-making, amongst other topics.

- Shaking the Structures (2019), an FCH text that takes as its starting point artist Sonya Lindfors regularly stated call to 'shake the structures', and critically interrogate the working conditions we build and uphold.

- The advocacy tools (2008-onwards) developed by the activist and non-profit group W.A.G.E. (Working Artists and the Greater Economy), and their call for 'the remuneration of cultural value in capital value'.

- What does it mean to say YES to artists? (2024-25), a sample programming rubric by artist SJ Norman centred around an imagined institutional infrastructure that has responded to the everyday needs of artists.

- *What Would a Trauma-Informed Museum Look Like* (2017) considers how "we can find forms of collective expression which approach the edges of the unspeakable, without causing further harm".

- A White Institution's Guide for Welcoming Artists of Color* and their Audiences (2016-20), which offers guidance for redistributing material and immaterial resources when welcoming and working with Black folks and people of colour.

CHAPTER RESOURCES

Elements of this work grew from experiences, memories, and testimonies gathered during years of working within cultural fields in different contexts. Other aspects developed through collective conversations, workshops, presentations, chats, hangs, venting sessions, and gossip. It's hard to untangle these threads, but some recent references include:

- We've previously thought a lot about how to begin collaborations, and **INVITATION** builds upon our 2020 text Terms & Conditions: What do we need in order to work together? (2020), commissioned by Third Space. And don't forget

Airi Triisberg's Money compass for precarious workers when deciding if you'll accept a gig or an invitation!

- When considering a best practice approach to organising **OPEN CALLS**, we spent time with School of Commons' Eligibility Criteria, and the Tender Research Project (2022), produced by artist and facilitator Ruth Singer, which names and analyses the (structural) barriers that might prevent artists from applying to open calls. We also admire the thinking within GenderFail's *Application as Artwork* publication.

- When starting to research **STUDIO VISITS** and labour conditions, we reflected on other fields in which pitching is common. Why Not Pitch For Free (2024) by Porto Rocha design agency is an advocacy tool justifying why they refuse to participate in unpaid creative work, particularly relevant for clients and professionals within the fields of design and branding. We also remembered the advocacy of the American Screen Actors' Guild and their reminder that Auditions Are Work, and actors are legally entitled to get paid for them.

- Rosalie Schweiker's practice of articulating needs has been instrumental in influencing our work on **NEGOTIATIONS**. To get on the same page with collaborators, here is a great archive of different Codes of Conduct and Safer Space guidelines that could inspire collective working principles. You can also copy and edit the living and experimental document Terms of Engagement (2021–) by Make or Break when working with institutional commissioning bodies. Artist Jack Ky Tan developed this Easy read artist contract (2022), a template that aims to be accessible, easy to read, and free of jargon.

- The subsection about **CONFLICT** was shaped in part by the Everyday Abolition: A Peer Learning Syllabus (2024), which seeded the idea that no one is an 'expert' in dealing with conflict, and it is both inevitable and potentially generative. We also enjoyed How To De-Escalate Conflict & Build Stronger Movements (2025) by Kai Cheng Thom— it reflects on somatic responses, and critically reworks the idea of **WINDOWS OF TOLERANCE** into a Window of Transformation that can be a supportive touchstone during instances of conflict.

- The thinking within **OTHER CURRENCIES** was shaped by the *Art for UBI (manifesto)* and its definition of the precarious artists' role within labour markets. We also appreciate Kuba Szreder's term 'projectariat', and Silvio Lorusso's *Entreprecariat: Everyone Is an Entrepreneur Nobody Is Safe*, and his term 'dishonorarium'.

- When developing the prompts for **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT PRACTICES**, we were guided by Christina Templin's Why Citation Matters (2021) which is grounded in Sara Ahmed's thinking, and its exploration of how citing is worldbuilding and knowledge production is never neutral. Although its Tumblr community is no longer active, we enjoyed the ideas that underpin the Citation Practices Challenge (2018). And in following the innateness and inevitability of change, we found this 2018 reflection on Trans Citation Practices within academia to be a helpful foundation for future thought. We enjoy following School of Commons following Jack Halberstam towards practices of hyperreal citation, and are

already imagining how we could expand this publication into a PhD proposal grounded in hyperauthorship and collective writing 😏

SOUNDING BOARD

An important part of our writing process was to incorporate other perspectives into our text. For this, we invited seven practitioners to join our Sounding Board. **Anastasia (A) Alevtin, Joseph Baan, Gladys Camilo, Hanan Mahbouba, Paria Mohajerani, Lara Okafor,** and **Airi Triisberg** work across visual and performance art, critical theory, writing, and cultural production, and mostly live and work in the Nordic-Baltic region. We asked them to read our first manuscript, and offer critical feedback, suggest new paths to explore, identify gaps, and take note of the moments when they smiled, winced, or cringed 🤪

We are grateful for their presence in our text, and for the time and kindness they offered to this task—our publication has truly benefited from their ideas and guidance. Below, you can get to know them a little bit better.

Anastasia (A) Alevtin (they / them) dwells as a theorist, writer, and artist whose work studies ways in which queercrip, migratised, and other precarious

individuals and communities quietly subvert Western politics' structural marginalisation. Social inflammation, crip theory, and the corpo-affectivity of chronic illness are on (A)'s mind at present.

Joseph Baan (they / them) engages in art, education, and collaboration as ways to forge creative survival. They're interested in the complexity of collectivity and in the possibility of establishing a solidarity that does not homogenise, but affirms difference.

Gladys Camilo (she / her) is an interdisciplinary artist whose practice centres on sustainability and the natural world. Camilo's work investigates how care—both as a labour and a material—shapes personal and collective identities. Her work is guided by an intuitive and emotive approach, often incorporating upcycled materials and natural dyes / pigments.

Hanan Mahbouba (she / her) is an arts worker, writer, and teacher. She works with text and video to explore the themes of post-migration and diasporic cultural legacy.

Paria Mohajerani is a Helsinki-based performance artist from Iran. She recently completed a master's in Live Art and Performance Studies and explores sustainable practices through participatory performance art events. Her work invites communities to dare to reshape dominant narratives of fixed identities and truth.

Lara Okafor (they / them) is a writer, technologist, and cultural worker. They are interested in Black Studies, prison abolition, speculative fiction, queerness, technology, communal work, and their overlaps.

Airi Triisberg (they / them) is an independent writer, curator, and educator. They are actively engaged in advocacy work to improve working conditions in the art sector, performing different roles such as journalist, labour organiser, tax critic, coach in financial education, and agitator of saying "no" to unpaid labour.

ABOUT THE DESIGN

Throughout the years, we've thought a lot about intersectionality in relation to our visual communication and design. We try to align our choices with the values that guide our work and that we have already talked about in this publication. When we share our work through publications or social media, for example, using design critically is another way in which we try to put intersectional feminism into practice.

The book ***Extra Bold: A Feminist, Inclusive, Anti-racist, Nonbinary Field Guide for Graphic Designers*** (2021) is a major inspiration for us. It is a thorough, stunning, practical, and informative (design) career guide for practicing intersectional feminism through everyday choices for graphic designers, but which would undoubtedly benefit anyone working in the cultural field. **Futuress**, 'a hybrid between a learning community and a publishing platform [...] to radically democratize design education and amplify marginalized voices', has also been an immense source of learning for us. We actively follow and consult it

when researching and thinking about design and worldbuilding.

The main text of *Windows of Tolerance* is typeset in **Inclusive Sans**, designed by Olivia King. We were so excited to learn about this typeface, as it strives to make accessibility the default rather than the exception in type design. You can read more about Olivia's inspiring research and approach **here**. Similarly, **Lexie Readable**, the **typeface** we use for some of the 🤪**fun**🤪 stuff here, was also designed with legibility and accessibility in mind, and we love how playful it is.

For the titles, we use **Gap Sans**, designed by Alexandre Liziard and Étienne Ozeray. We found it via **Open Foundry**, which has a beautifully curated collection of open source typefaces. We appreciate this and other open source initiatives in the field of graphic design, since they not only signal to creative practices grounded in collectivity and reciprocity, but because they provide access for those who can't afford to buy individual licenses or purchase expensive softwares like Adobe.

Flint*ype is also one of the first websites we consult when looking for typefaces for a new project. It's very practical, constantly updated, and aligns with our commitment to highlight and uplift the work of underrepresented artists. While we appreciate open source licenses, we also try to allocate money in our budgets for purchasing typefaces from underrepresented type designers when we have funding available to do this. We have used tools like the Global Type report by It's Nice That to find independent type foundries around the world, and are truly grateful for the hivemind at Are.na that has led us to wonderful designers that share our values.

Throughout these pages you'll find illustrations created by Gladys Camilo. This series is inspired by the concepts of support structures and portals to other, more hopeful worlds. It was made with MoebiusXBIN, an open source ASCII art editor which enabled Gladys to create a custom character set designed to function as modular blocks, which she then pieced together to construct larger, more intricate structures.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our practice is always collaborative, and all the ideas and proposals found in this publication were born out of those experiences. We are grateful to all the artists and cultural workers who've trusted and collaborated with us over the years, as well as friends and peers who've spent time talking and thinking through many of the ideas that inform our work.

Thank you again to our Sounding Board members: **Anastasia (A) Alevtin, Joseph Baan, Gladys Camilo, Hanan Mahbouba, Paria Mohajerani, Lara Okafor,** and **Airi Triisberg**.

Airi also generously shared the English translation of their Money compass for precarious workers, and connected us with graphic designer **Martin Eelma** so an English-language version could be included here as a resource. Thank you!

Big thanks to **Muj Abdulzade** and **Else Lagerspetz** for graphic design guidance 👩🏻‍💻

Thanks so much to our friends for the ongoing conversations that supported the writing of this publication: **Jessie Bullivant, Benjamin Forster, Andrea Gilly, Flis Holland, Naya Magaliou, Neicia Marsh, Carla Rivera, Sofía Secín,** and **Shubhangi Singh**.

In winter 2024, we were kindly invited by **Anne Marte Archer** and **Martina Petrelli** from **Atelier Kunstnerforbundet** (Oslo) to host a workshop with local artists to discuss needs and studio visits. We were also delighted to present a public talk with **Patricia Carolina** and **Sarah Kazmi** from Verdensrommet, a network that inspires us greatly. Many of our conversations in Oslo fermented into thoughts that ground this publication, and we appreciate everyone who welcomed us.

We're grateful to **Yvette Bathgate** and **Jake Shepherd** for the summer 2025 invitation to present our research into other currencies within the greenhouse and community garden program at EKKM, a space to gather, a place to grow. Thanks for your thoughtful and considerate hosting and kind collaborative practices 🌱🌱

Kiitos to the co-working community at Poimu, our Helsinki studio space that hosted most of the conversations and co-writing sessions from 2023 that developed into this publication. There were many moments around our big table where we laughed, sighed, and were side-eyed by **Snooz** the pooch. Thank you also to our room mate **Javier Ureña Carrión** for sharing space, time, and thoughts with us.

Gladys would like to thank **Heikki Lotvonen** for his encouragement to use different tools. Katie wishes to thank **Al McEwen** for eternal love, support, and laughter.

From 2019-21, **Katie Lenanton, Neicia Marsh, Orlan Ohtonen,** and **Selina Väliheikki** co-founded and co-directed FCH, supported by Kone Foundation. Many structures, practices of doing, and seeds of thinking were sown in these years. We thank the founding members for their contributions, and recognise that these beginnings shaped how Gladys, Katie, and Paola work with FCH today 💜🧡

Windows of Tolerance: Tools for Ideal Collaborations in an Unideal (Art) World

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